セブンス 2nd.

illustration
ともぞ

Yomu Mishima
三嶋与夢

2

ヒーロー文庫

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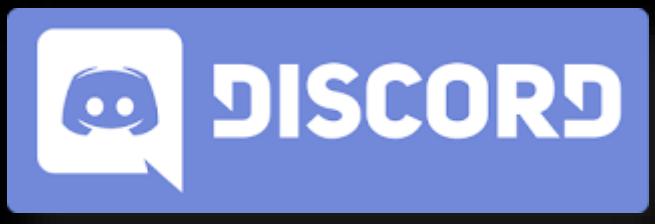

Yomu Mishima
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「大丈夫！私はこっちの方が向いているわ！」
汗だくのアリアさんは、割と元気だった。
セブンス
7th

ノウェムやアリア、
それにソフィアもゼルフィーに
連れられて銭湯で湯船に浸かっていた。
「いや、本当にこの瞬間は
最高だよね」

「へえ、珍しいな」
五代目が少し驚く。
俺たちの前に出て来たその魔物――オークは、
左手に持った大剣を肩に担いでいた。
ただし……その姿はオークとは言い難かった。
「下がれ！そいつは亜種だ！」

「は、はい！」
『ライエル！手を挙げろ！』
右手を掲げると、初代は俺の方に歩いてきて
力強くハイタッチをすると俺の横を通り過ぎる。

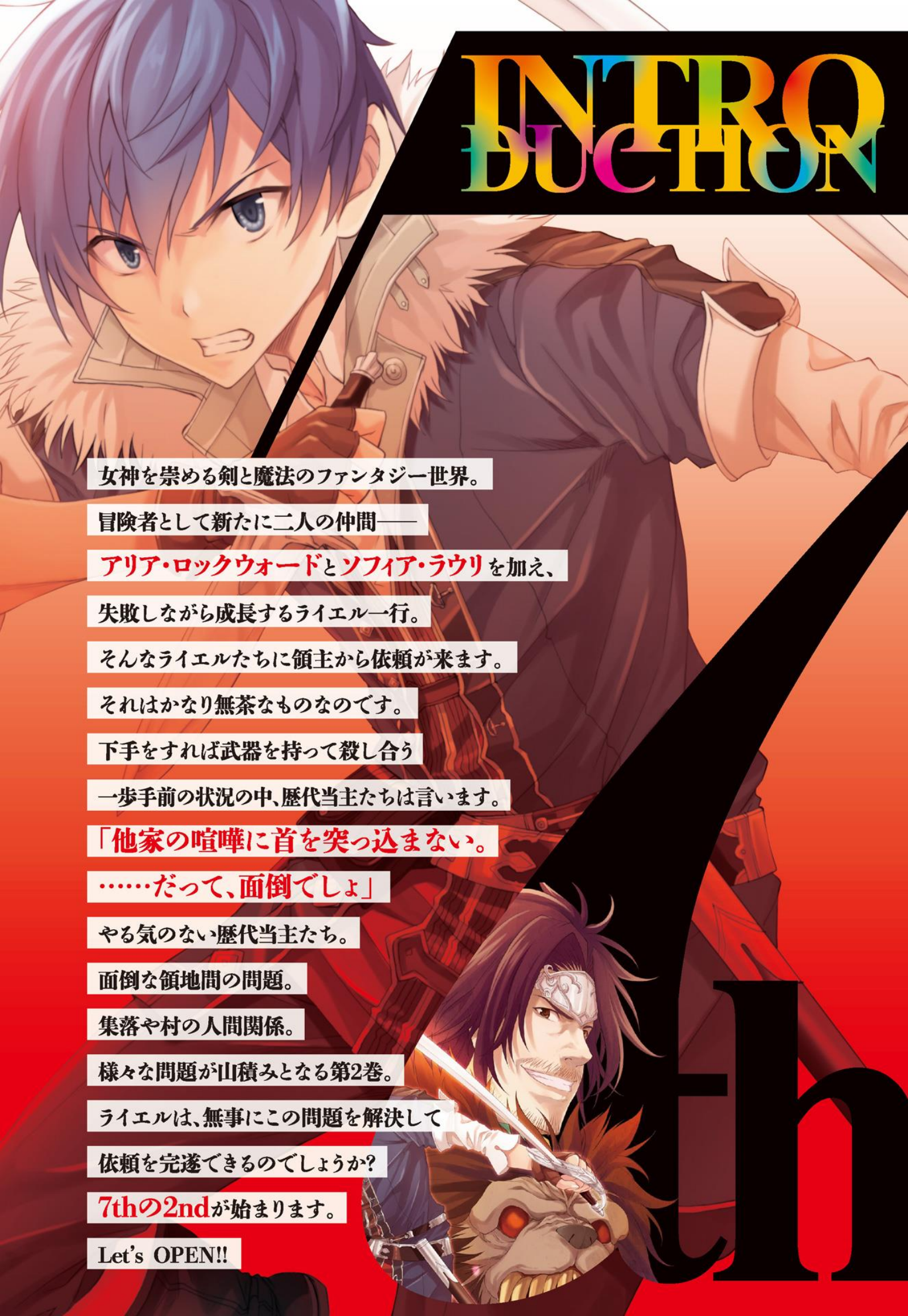
INTRODUCTION
女神を崇める剣と魔法のファンタジー世界。
冒険者として新たに二人の仲間——
アリア・ロックウォードとソフィア・ラウリを加え、
失敗しながら成長するライエル一行。
そんなライエルたちに領主から依頼が来ます。
それはかなり無茶なものなのです。
下手をすれば武器を持って殺し合う
一歩手前の状況の中、歴代当主たちは言います。
「他家の喧嘩に首を突っ込まない。
……だって、面倒でしょ」
やる気のない歴代当主たち。
面倒な領地間の問題。
集落や村の人間関係。
様々な問題が山積みとなる第2巻。
ライエルは、無事にこの問題を解決して
依頼を完遂できるのでしょうか?
7thの2ndが始まります。
Let's OPEN!!
7th

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illustration よもぞ

Prologue

My destination after leaving the inn was a blacksmith that was famous even in Dalien.

My name is Lyle Walt. Currently I'm walking through the city that was boisterous since early in the morning.

I stifled my yawn and touched my front hair to confirm the persistent bed hair there. My blue hair, blue eyes—and then the blue Jewel embedded into a silver necklace hanging from my neck were shining too today from the sunlight.

Speaking about my outfit, my right hand was carrying a jacket with fur around its collar, and two belts on my waist. Originally weapons would be hanging from them but today I was unarmed.

It was an unreliable appearance for an adventurer, but I'm unarmed because my weapons were left at the blacksmith for repair.

The girl walking beside me, Novem Forxus was looking at me worriedly with her purple eyes. Her brown hair that was tied into side ponytail looked radiant too today.

She was a magician wearing blue coat and carrying a silver staff. Furthermore she was an amazingly skilled magician, a second daughter of a baron house, and my former fiancée.

Novem is a girl who followed me who became adventurer after I was driven out from my house that was a house of count—Walt House.

I who lost against my little sister Celes in the succession struggle was driven out from the house because I wasn't worthy for the position of the next family head. I fought my little sister and she wiped the floor with me. I who was driven out from the house got

helped by Zel-jiisan who worked as gardener and he gave me the blue Jewel that was Walt House's family heirloom.

When I who lost everything left the house like that, Novem came along with me. She followed me persistently even when I tried to turn her away. Moreover, she even sold her dowry to raise money for my sake and hired an exclusive instructor that was necessary in order for me to become a first class adventurer.

Actually, I didn't seriously plan to become adventurer when leaving the house, but Novem had gone that far for me, so I'm thinking to aim to become a first class adventurer right now.

Novem was a woman who was too good for someone like me.

It's just, she is a bit……no, she is excessively overprotective, but the reason of that was because of me being unreliable. I was driven out from a count house and became adventurer following the flow of event, but until then I had never left my house even once. I didn't know about the world and because of that I became an adventurer with the naïve thinking that I would manage somehow.

However, the world wasn't that kind.

I had failed many times since becoming adventurer. There were also several time where I almost lose heart within a short period of time. Even now after a month had passed since I arrived in Dalien and became adventurer, I was bad because I kept making Novem worried. ……It was like that.

"Novem, I'll be fine so don't worry. I'm only going to take my weapons."

I told her to assure her, but Novem still looked uneasy. Am I really that unreliable?

"As I thought perhaps I should also come with Lyle-sama."

"No, I’m really just going to take my weapons. I’ll immediately head to the guild right after taking them."

We had repeated the same exchange several times since the morning. Novem finally followed my opinion reluctantly.

"I understand. Then, I will be waiting at the second floor of the guild."

There were already shops that were starting to open at the surrounding, calling out energetically to the passerby. Construction of the rampart that could be seen from between the gap of the buildings also already started early.

Dalien—this town that was near the capital of Bahnseim Kingdom was a city that was governed by a baron named Ventra Rodornia. This was a city that novice adventurer was thankful for because it provided a lot of job for them.

The baron house’s knights and soldiers defeated the monsters around two and maintained the public order. The lively city wanted more manpower for expansion construction work.

Because of that, rookies who hadn’t become adventurer for long were able to work safely behind the wall and earned money. And then, even when they went outside they wouldn’t meet any troublesome monster.

Dalien was a convenient city for rookie adventurer.

Novem was uneasy, but she headed to the guild when we reached an intersection. She looked back at me several times.

I smiled wryly while waving my hand, and then I headed toward the blacksmith. My forehead was sweaty because of the morning sunlight. The season was already changing from spring entering into summer.

When I walked alone, I sighed deeply and muttered.

"I think it’s alright even if she trust me a bit more though. Even like this I’ve succeeded in subjugating a bandit group and finally earned money in the way that is fitting as adventurer."

Dalien’s mining site. In order to rescue an acquaintance that was kidnapped by a bandit group lurking in there, I subjugated a bandit group.

More accurately speaking I was only driving them out, but I involved the feudal lord Ventra-san and the feudal lords of the surrounding territories too and made them annihilated the bandit group.

At that time I was given advice by the ancestors of Walt House who currently were recorded inside the Jewel—a round blue gem with diameter of three centimeter embedded into a silver pendant—hanging on my neck.

A wild voice laughed loudly. I could hear that voice from the Jewel. Perhaps it was better to say that the voice resounded inside my head, the loud voice didn’t reach the people passing by me.

The owner of the wild voice was the first generation head of Walt House, Basil Walt. He had fur wrapped around his neck, and unkempt brown hair. His appearance was like someone from a barbarian tribe, or rather he was exactly a barbarian, but he was the founder of Walt House, a house of feudal lord that was said to be the strongest in Bahnseim Kingdom.

[Gahahaha, stupid idiot. Someone like you still have some way to go yet. You’ve got to become a slightly wilder man like me.]

The one who poured cold water on the First who was in a good mood was the second generation head who was dressed like a

hunter, Crassel Walt. Naturally he and the First had the relationship of father and son. However, this parent and son……had extremely bad relationship.

[I told you already, you aren't wild but a barbarian. Lyle, you mustn't become like this guy.]

The one who objected to the Second's voice was his son, the third generation Sleigh Walt. He was a man with blond hair reaching until above his shoulder. He looked like a man of delicate features and carefree attitude. Despite his appearance, he was the most black-hearted person among the seven ancestors.

He carved his name in the history of Bahnseim and he was talked through generations as a righteous general, but like this there wasn't the slightest impression like that from him.

[Their conversation is just like usual. It's amazing how they haven't gotten tired of it. But, I too also wish that Lyle will work a bit harder though.]

Surely he was shaking his head while going 'good grief' inside the Jewel. The son of such the Third, the fourth generation—Max Walt, a man with blue hair that was parted to one side and wearing glasses. He was the head of the house at the time when Walt House that formerly was a feudal lord house with the lowest status of knight peerage advanced in rank to become a baron house.

[I certainly agree with that. I have the same opinion too. But, when it's chichi-uefather who said that, it make me want to tell you that you have no right saying that.]

The Third, Sleigh Walt was the first head of Walt House who died in war. After that the young the Fourth succeeded him and it seemed he went through many hardships because of that.

……The Fifth, Fredericks Walt had green hair that he tied up behind him. His eyes were half closed. Normally he didn't talk much, but this morning he joined the talk.

[How about the Fourth look at the mirror too.]

His short words were filled with dissatisfaction toward the Fourth. It wasn't conspicuous because of extremely bad relationship of the First and the Second, but the other parent-son relationships of these people here also contained some kind of problem. That was how it was in Walt House.

The Sixth, Fiennes Walt were astonished at such the Fifth. The Sixth was the tallest person among the ancestors. Compared to the Fifth with his small build, it was hard to tell which one was the parent and which one was the son.

His red hair and beard grew connected, giving his an appearance like a lion. He completely didn't look like the house head of Walt House when it was still had viscount rank, but he had good-humored personality and he was like an older brother for me. In spite of his appearance, he was the one who was most considerate to me.

[I also understand what Lyle want to say. But, from Novem's viewpoint you are still worrying. You should make her feel relieved by showing it with your action from here on.]

It was the most reliable opinion. But a doubting voice toward such constructive opinion of the Sixth came. The voice came from the Seventh who was my grandfather, Brod Walt. He had swept back gray hair and sharp gaze. I heard that he was an extremely strict person, but for me he was a kind grandfather.

[Even if the Sixth said that, honestly it doesn't resounded in my heart. But you know, Lyle. You are already shouldering the lives of two people. You have to become more reliable.]

Two lives—yes, I was already shouldering the burden of two lives.

My former fiancée Novem who headed toward the adventurer guild just now.

She was a woman who devoted herself to me even after I got driven out from my house. I wanted to make her happy no matter what, but at this point there was one more person…….

The girl I saved from the bandit group—Aria Lockwarde, I had to shoulder even her life.

……It was an unexpected happening for me. Certainly I wanted to save her. She called out to me when I was feeling down after coming to Dalien. Aria-san had red hair that slightly curled to the outside here and there which grew out until her back, purple colored eyes, and bright smiling face.

Aria-san's father cooperated with the bandit group and got judged. His punishment would also befall his family. In order to save Aria-san from that, I made a deal with Ventra-san and drove out the bandit group. I handed them over to the knights of the territories where the bandit group rampaged, and solved the complicated problem between territories. I accomplished my prmise and Ventra-san also spared Aria-san just as promised.

But, he wanted to at least make it so Aria-san seemed to be punished toward the public by selling Aria-san to a brothel. Although the brothel was a nonexistent one, and I without delay bought Aria-san into my possession to free her from being a prostitute.

Ventra-san didn't need to be responsible about Aria-san after she got sold and only the fact that he had punished her remained, which saved his face. He spared Aria-san just as he promised with me. So to speak, it was a laundering using a fictive brothel.

The ancestors of Walt House were really something, but Ventra-san was also a cunning one. However the final result could be said to come out just as desired. Though it was unfortunate that Aria-san's personal history got sullied through it.

But. But, however!

Me buying out Aria-san from the prostitution had the significance of me shouldering the life of Aria-san.

Of course, I intended to free her after buying her. I intended to but, Aria-san was already penniless, she also had no home to return to. Unable to throw her out to the street like that, I ended up looking after Aria-san.

I did but, here Novem became a problem.

"……Normally speaking, you know? Typically, that is. If a man you love bought out a prostitute, the woman will get angry won't she?"

It was the First who answered my question. But, this First—Aria-san looked completely the same like his first love, furthermore she was the descendant of that person, so the First was partial to Aria-san.

[Lyle! If you are a man then show that you can at least shoulder the life of two women! I believe in you that you are a capable man.]

Previously, the First kept nagging me to absolutely make Novem happy seeing that she was from Forxus House that could be said as the house all generations of the family heads were indebted to.

Now he was telling me to make Aria-san happy too.

The Second was exasperated. He advised me with a sigh mixed in his voice.

[I never thought that Novem-chan would accept it. That was a great miscalculation. But, Lyle……it already happened. Besides, if the person herself doesn't really objecting to it, then just accept it. It's really envious you know. Do you know how hard it was for me to get my wife……especially because of the fault of a certain someone's "family precepts"!]

Family precepts—in Walt House there was family precepts for taking wife. Like the woman must have excellent face and figure, or her skin has to be beautiful, there were a total of six requirements.

But, this family precepts……it was a lie that the First spouted out when he was drunk because he didn't want to get married after his unrequited love, and it remained until now as family precepts.

The family precepts that had been protected importantly through generations, was actually a lie that was spouted while drunk!

It was a truth that I didn't want to know. Well, this might be an example that made you think that's how the world is.

"It's Novem. To think that Novem would accept harem……I'm not that skillful, I don't know how to deal with two women at the same time. ……I'm feeling uneasy."

The Fourth muttered something incomprehensible like [Not skillful, is it. Well, I guess that's true for you in that area].

Even though I couldn't satisfactorily treat even just Novem alone, with the addition of Aria-san too I didn't know what I should do. Even though I was thinking of how to make Novem happy, I never even imagined that the number of people would increase to two.

I was unable to mentally prepare myself. The Third tried to remove my anxiety.

[Well, if you thought about the reverse of this situation, it wouldn't be something amusing at all. But, Novem-chan looks happy. It also doesn't look like she will become disgusted and abandoned Lyle……well, she is a second daughter of a baron house, so perhaps she is thinking that having mistress is normal or something?]

My expectation was greatly disordered due to Novem's action. I sighed and arrived in front of the blacksmith that was my destination.

The signboard was drawn with armor and weapon. Perhaps it was for the sake of people who couldn't write letter.

I stopped talking with the ancestors for the moment. Actually this noisy talk was consuming my mana. Because of that, my mana would be continuously consumed if the talk was continued for long and I would collapse at the end due to insufficient mana. Jewel—it was a tool that could use a special power that was different from the convenient magic, called Art.

My mana was sucked by the Jewel, the conversation with the ancestors who were resurrected inside the Jewel for some reason was also sucking my mana……the mana that I could use for myself was little. My handling of magic that I was skilled in previously now became poor. I also couldn't use the majority of Arts that were recorded inside the Jewel. The current me was in such half-baked state.

I would believe it even if I was told that this Jewel was a cursed item. No, I couldn't help but think so.

"Well, it's better compared to at the beginning I guess? ……Let's get inside."

I opened the door and entered inside the shop that was filled with the smell of iron, leather, oil, and so on. There was a customer

already inside since early in the morning. But, the situation was strange.

The dwarf female shopkeeper had small stature compared to human. She looked like a girl, but the long lived dwarf who could live twice the age of human generally could be in the age of sixty or a hundred even with their youthful appearance.

The shopkeeper of this shop too looked like a little girl wearing a leather apron. That shopkeeper was holding her forehead with a troubled look at the counter.

The customer, a youth had small build and plump body. His clothes was dirtier with soil compared to the people I saw in the city, he looked like a traveler that came to Dalien from somewhere.

There was a metal armor placed on the counter. It was a full set of armor, but there was a lot of dented spot on it. Besides, there was a large gash at one spot. It looked fatal.

"Look here, lad. The name carved on this breastplate isn't yours right? I'm troubled even if you told me to manage somehow for something like this. You also cannot tell me the circumstance of this armor, I cannot handle this item then."

The plump youth was troubled. And then, he also looked vaguely impatient.

"I, I'm sorry. But, please somehow……"

The Third showed interest at the situation.

[Oh? Don't tell me this boy is bringing a stolen item? From his appearance he is a peasant……while the armor he brought has quite good quality. Did he steal it from a servant somewhere? That was a bold thing he did.]

The Third laughed, but in reality this was an outrageous matter.

Then, the female shopkeeper noticed me and gestured at me with her hand. I felt awkward but I approached the counter, then the youth put back the armor into his bag in panic.

For an instant I saw a trace of blood on the armor.

"I, I'll come again."

After seeing off the back of the youth that left in a hurry, the shopkeeper shrugged. I asked what was on my mind.

"What was that?"

The shopkeeper scratched her hair with her left hand while shutting her eyes.

"No, no matter how I saw it that was a stolen item. It had been wiped but trace of blood remained on it……what's more, he didn't ask me to buy it, he asked me to repair it. In addition he ask to keep the size as it is, he didn't ask to fit the armor into his size. At first I thought he was asked by someone to do that."

But, after hearing the youth's story there was many things that didn't fit and the shopkeeper was hesitating whether to accept the repair request.

[What a strange boy.]

The First was suspicious at the youth's action, but he also wasn't that interested and didn't say anything more.

The shopkeeper opened her eyes and looked at me. She looked really concerned about the trace of destruction on the armor just now.

She surmised what made such gash using her experience until now.

"That gash, could it be an orc perhaps? ……Now then, I've got to take care of the order of you boy too. About the saber and short sword you brought the other day, frankly speaking they are no good already. They haven't snapped but, they aren't something usable anymore."

When I fought the boss of the bandit group, the opponent used multiple Arts. I used my weapon the saber and a short sword in order to endure his fierce attack. It seemed they couldn't be repaired.

But, this was also something I already realized.

"Is that so. Then, along for a reserve please give me two new sabers. Short sword too……ah, three of them."

The shopkeeper faced the shelves behind her, and from there she took two sabers to bring to the counter. Her movement was jaunty. As I thought I could only see her as a child.

"Here, they are fine right?"

I looked at the sabers placed on the counter. After that, I looked across the shop's interior. Most of the weapons that were placed here gave thick and heavy impression. There were spear, blunt weapon, and then axe and bow. For sword there was double-edged one placed on the wall. Everything was created by the owner of this shop who was the shopkeeper's husband.

But, the sabers that I were going to buy were items that were ordered from the capital of this country, Centralle. It seemed they were merchandises that were only left here.

The shopkeeper chose three short swords while talking to me.

"Boy, how about you also switch to a firmer weapon? All the merchandise of my husband is solid and evaluated well."

This shop was a shop with good evaluation from adventurer, soldier, and even knight in Dalien. In fact, this kind of shop was popular in Dalien that sought practical arms.

When I stared at an armor with little decoration, I could hear the complaints of the ancestors.

[If you are a man than a large sword that is like a lump of iron is the best.]

[It's bow. Bow! Lyle, bow is great.]

[The weapon you are used to is the best but, a doubled edged solid sword might be good too.]

[Short sword is the best.]

[……Serpent sword.]

[No, as expected spear is also good but halberd is undoubtedly the strongest weapon……]

[Lyle, gun is great you know? It's pricey but, it's a weapon with good prospect.]

Each of them was recommending the weapon they specialized in. Coming this far I had understood it, the ancestors inside the Jewel would give their advice, but what they said couldn't be guaranteed as correct. They spoke their answer based on their respective sense of values and experience, there were also many times they were mistaken.

Furthermore, with seven people there their opinion wouldn't match. Everyone said different thing.

[If you're a man then it's great sword!]

[Don't look down on bow! It's mankind's greatest weapon!]

The First and the Second started quarreling again. I felt uneasy at my mana that was going down rapidly since early in the morning.

"……Well, I’m used at using saber."

The shopkeeper didn’t insist more after that.

"I see. Well, it’s something that you entrust your life to. I can admire those who has obsession to their weapon. What’s unfortunate is my husband didn’t make this so I cannot sell them confidently. Now then, these are the short swords. Choose which you like."

There were a total of six short swords placed on the counter, each with subtly different make. I chose three from them and paid for my purchase, then the shopkeeper asked me.

"By the way, that girl with side ponytail isn’t here?"

"Novem? Today she is going to the guild ahead of me."

The shopkeeper looked a bit disappointed.

"What’s with that. It would be great if you bring her here. My husband also would be in a good mood when that girl came. He would even expressly get out from the workshop and show his face. It’s really rare for him to do that."

I could understand that they were really pleased with Novem……even more than toward me.

The Third spoke happily.

[As expected from Novem-chan. She is a good girl who is liked by her surrounding.]

I waved my hand to the shopkeeper and said my thanks, then I left the shop.

.

—Dalien's adventurer guild.

Its first floor was opened and merchants took station there right from early in the morning. It was bustling like a market.

There were a lot of wagons coming and going, the adventurers who returned from outside headed to the first floor bringing material and magic stone stripped off from monster—the parts of monster that could be processed.

The merchants bought materials from the adventurers. The magic stone was brought and sold to the guild staff at the first floor.

Adventurer guild was an independent organization that existed in each city. But, they adopted common rule and had connection with each other in order to manage adventurer.

They would cooperate with each other, but each of them was organization that was independent from each other. Because of that each guild would have strong personal characteristic depending on the area.

Dalien was kind to beginner adventurer, but it was a city that was insufficient for adventurer with real skill. The guild of Dalien too would prefer to focus their effort in raising beginner adventurer rather than bothering about the adventurer who left after growing strong.

Novem who was going up tot eh second floor of such Darion adventurer guild passed the adventurers who visited the reception since the morning.

Novem had well ordered features and it wouldn't be wrong to call her a beautiful girl. But, most of the men who passed her by didn't even give her a glance.

It was hard for adventurer, especially male adventurer to harbor romantic emotion toward the opposite sex in the same trade. But, Novem understood it best that wasn't the only reason why male adventurer wouldn't even give a glance to female adventurer.

Novem looked toward the counter without even any interest toward such matter.

There were three receptionists. Adventurers were lining up in front of each one and did some kind of procedure. There were also adventurers who stared at the billboard on the wall, checking request or the price of material. There were also people in conversation with each other talking about their plan ahead.

Novem found the figure of two females standing silently waiting in the noisy floor. She put up a smile on her expressionless face and approached the two.

One of them was Aria who was holding a luggage, staring uneasily at the surrounding.

Beside her, there was the figure of a female adventurer with short purple hair and brown tanned skin, Zelphy glaring at the males trying to call out to Aria.

The surrounding males were showing interest to Aria who wasn't dyed in the color of adventurer. Their attitude was the opposite from with Novem, like it was only natural to call out to a pretty girl. Zelphy glared at them and chased them away.

Zelphy was a daughter from a house that once served Lockwarde House. After Lockwarde House was ruined, they drifted to Dalien and became adventurer.

Because of that, for Zelphy, Aria was like an important little sister.

Zelphy was also an instructor who was teaching Lyle and Novem the basic as adventurer. Novem hired her with a lot of money in the amount of 20 gold coins. She was a veteran adventurer that the guild recommended to them.

The two of them wasn't dressed for working after this, they were dressed casually. In the first place they had no plan of working today, it was a day to formally enter Aria into their party.

Novem greeted the two.

"Good morning, Zelphy-san, Aria-san."

Aria and Zelphy replied to Novem while looking around questioningly.

"Go, good morning. E, err……what about Lyle?"

"Morning. Is he late?"

Zelphy seemed to think that Lyle was late, but Novem shook her head slightly in negative.

"No. Today Lyle-sama went to take his weapon. He should be coming in time."

Zelphy placed her hands behind her head and leaned on the wall.

"Now that you mention it, his weapons were tattered huh. However, I still cannot believe that Lyle defeated the bandit group's Art user chief."

Lyle would almost collapse when she made him cleaned ditch. He collapsed after using magic. He also collapsed in the middle of talk. He would lose consciousness in everything. Zelphy only had the impression of him fainting and unable to believe that Lyle would accomplish such achievement.

On the surface Lyle was only driving away the bandit group. But, Zelphy was there at the bandit group subjugation. Furthermore she was an adventurer with connection to the feudal lord Ventra. In fact, she also knew how Lyle moved behind the scene.

Aria seemed to recall the time when she was rescued and she looked down with blushing cheeks.

"I, is that so? I thought he was really cool……a, at that time he looked tired……"

Aria had positive reaction to Lyle, perhaps because she was in love with him. Zelphy was watching her with bored expression.

Novem chuckled, then she waited for Lyle with the two of them. They stood near the wall and looked across the guild. Then, three familiar faces approached them. No, four people. The three were leading someone.

One of the four, a swordsman that could be called an agreeable youth, Rondo found Novem and the other two. He walked while taking about Novem’s group to a robed girl he was leading.

"Ah, there they are. Looks like he isn’t here right now but, I think he will come after this."

A tall youth holding a spear on his shoulder with Mohawk head that looked like delinquent, Ralph. However, he talked with a kind tone that was in contrast with his appearance to the girl.

"How about talking to those three first?"

A petite girl standing between those two youths while carrying a staff, Rachel was,

"Hey, you two don’t flirt with her! She is Lyle’s guest."

The three were adventurers who became close with Lyle after coming to Dalien. The three of them came from the same birthplace and formed party. They also cooperated with the bandit group subjugation. They were an adventurer party with most interaction with Lyle and others.

The girl wearing black robe took off her hood and long black hair fluttered to the side. Black eyes that looked strong willed. Her figure emphasized her femininity. But, the large axe—battle axe—on her back made her strangeness conspicuous.

Novem waved her hand to the approaching four people.

"Rachel-san and everyone……and Sophia-san, was it?"

The girl's name was Sophia Lauri. She was a girl whose battle axe that was her family heirloom was recovered by Lyle at the bandit group subjugation. Novem also saw her at that time.

Sophia bowed and greeted them.

"Yes. I am Sophia Lauri. Many thanks for the other day. I'm really grateful for everyone's help in taking back the heirloom of Lauri House."

Rachel nudged Sophia with her elbow. She looked slightly happy.

"Sophia-chan, she came here to thank Lyle. She was lost so we guided her here. Somehow it reminded me when we met Novem and Lyle."

Rondo put his hand on his chin and looked up slightly.

"You're right. Come to think of it, this is the second time we guided someone to the guild. However, I'm glad that Aria-san also looks well."

Ralph also nodded smilingly.

"Ain’t that right. I never thought that you would be helped with that kind of method. That guy Lyle too, I wouldn’t misunderstand if only he mentioned it."

Misunderstanding, it was about Lyle buying out Aria. Rondo and others knew about Lyle and Novem’s relationship, they were seriously shirking back when hearing about Lyle buying out Aria.

Now they realized that it was a misunderstanding and they guided Sophia here like this with the intention of apologizing to Lyle too. Rondo looked around.

"We’ve got to apologize quickly. Even so, Sophia-san too, you must have it hard to expressly come here to say your thanks."

Then Sophia tilted her head.

"Hah? No, I come to repay him back."

Rachel nodded several times. Aria didn’t look amused looking at Sophia.

"I get it, Sophia came this far bringing something as thanks aren’t you? How honorable~"

Sophia tilted her head again to the opposite direction.

Novem seemed to notice something from that gesture of Sophia and asked to confirm.

"Sophia-san, let me ask just in case. What is your business meeting with Lyle-sama today?"

Then Sophia straightened her back and threw out her large breasts with her right hand placed on her chest. She answered with a really clear voice.

"I’m someone who has lost my house. I came here to return my debt to Lyle-dono with this body."

‘With this body’, when she said that the surrounding male adventurers immediately focused on Sophia. And then they looked at Sophia’s body figure that was obvious even from above the robe with licking gaze.

Rondo and others stiffened, Zelphy and Aria were also dumbfounded. Aria dropped her luggage.

……A strange silence enveloped the guild.

There, Lyle carrying his luggage climbed up the stair.

"Fuu, as I thought perhaps I should leave them in the inn first? But, I also want to test their use……ah, everyone here. Oo~I, wait……e, eh?"

Lyle formed a subjugation group when defeating the bandit group. At that time he acted like an idiot noble so, because of that he became famous in Dalien in a strange way.

“The idiot noble son Lyle”

A nickname that he wasn’t happy with at all spread. The gaze of the men inside the guild that had fallen silent stabbed at Lyle.

"E? Eh!?"

Novem looked at Sophia, then she asked one more time.

"Sophia-san, I’ll ask one more time. What do you want to do with Lyle-sama that you came here?"

Even while feeling puzzled, Sophia answered with even louder voice.

"I told you, I want to pay back my debt with this body, and so I came here today! I will pay back the favor of taking back my family heirloom with this body!"

Inside her heart Novem didn’t believe that Sophia would present her body to Lyle or anything. She understood that surely Sophia meant to return the favor by using her body to work. With that understanding, she turned a smile toward Sophia who wasn’t reading the atmosphere.

"Is that so……well, I will temporarily consider it a pass for now. Sophia-san, best regards from now on."

"Ha, haa, is that so. Temporary pass?"

The gazes toward Lyle became even sharper after Novem’s words. Aria became tearful, while Sophia tilted her head unable to understand what Novem meant by temporarily passing for now. Zelphy looked at Lyle with a frown.

Rondo and others were also looking coldly at Lyle. The surrounding was the same. The variety of the gazes was different, but none of them could be said as favorable.

"Eh……what’s going on? Eh, what’s this situation!?"

This day, Lyle ended up shouldering the lives of not two people, but three people—.

Chapter 17 – A Step Forward, A Step Back

[That’s really amazing, Lyle. Just when you were worrying about shouldering the lives of two people, the third one made her entrance. That was totally unexpected. Lyle, somehow you are at the side of “the have” aren’t you.]

It was the Third who was talking happily. What he meant by the have, perhaps it was something like luck factor. No, at this case perhaps it’s evil luck instead? No, calling it evil luck made it sounded like I’m prospering from doing bad thing.

Bad thing……I haven’t done anything like that, or it should be.

At present we were borrowing a room inside the guild and Zelphy-san was talking about our plan going ahead. In respond to Sophia-san who suddenly appeared, Novem said that this was a nice timing and made her joined our party. That weighed my mind.

Novem was basically a beauty who could do anything well, she was an able woman who was devoted to me. But, as could be seen from how she was accepting toward Aria-san, she possessed a mind with tendency toward harem. For some reason she was trying to place girls around me.

There were two long tables placed inside the room. The four of us were sitting in front of Zelphy-san. Novem and Aria sat at both my sides, while Sophia-san sat beside Novem.

Zelphy-san cleared her throat.

"Aa~, so that’s it. The young miss there want to work as adventurer in order to return the favor to Lyle. Is it okay if I thought of it like that?"

Sophia-san slightly casted her eyes down. She was sitting with her back straight and her resolute face blushing. She was bright red until her ears.

"Ye, yes! What I meant by paying with my body is in the sense of doing physical labor. The, there isn’t any other meaning to it!"

The Sixth murmured from inside the Jewel where only I could hear him.

[Physical labor, is it. For some reason when those words came out from this girl’s mouth, it sounded obscene.]

Surely because there was what happened just now. Sophia-san declared in the guild—furthermore in front of a lot of people that she would pay back her debt to me with her body.

Thanks to that my nickname changed from “idiot noble son” to “womanizer” in one day.

My image was rapidly heading to a bad direction.

Zelphy-san lazily waved her hand and interrupted that talk.

"I get it already so calm down. I’ll ask just one more time, you don’t have experience working as adventurer right?"

Sophia-an nodded and looked down.

"Bu, but, I came from a house of retainer knight. I have training in martial arts."

She was able to walk around while carrying a large battle axe. Her body must be trained, but Zelphy-san put her hand on her forehead. It seemed there was a problem.

"……Lyle, I want you to hear this as a suggestion from me. It’s not a bad talk for you."

"What is it?"

Zelphy-san’s gaze looked around at us then she folded both her hands and put them on the table.

"I and also the guild are in your debt from the bandit subjugation. With the addition of new members to your party, won’t you prolong the instruction period by two weeks? Of course, there won’t be any additional charge. The guild also won’t oppose it."

It would take money to have a veteran adventurer like Zelphy-san giving us exclusive instruction. The price was 20 gold coins for three months. If it could be prolonged for two weeks for free then I would be grateful. I’m grateful but…….

"Err, why is that?"

Novem turned her gaze to Aria-san and Sophia-san and nodded.

"That’s right, I guess that way will be better. Lyle-sama, I believe we should obediently accept this suggestion here."

Novem seemed to understand, but I didn’t understand. Zelphy-san made a conflicted expression while looking at Aria-san and Sophia-san.

The Second explained to me.

[It’s because these two are amateur. They have no knowledge or experience at all like you before becoming adventurer. She wants to teach these two the basics first.]

I looked down and thought for a bit. Thinking back of my first month, certainly I was unable to understand what adventurer was, I……ah!

"Eh, please wait a second! Then during those two weeks!"

I stood up in a flash and looked at Zelphy-san. Zelphy-san grinned and nodded.

"You finally get it. Well, let’s work hard doing the odd jobs. Don’t worry, after all the two weeks period will be service from my side."

Aria-san seemed to not comprehend it and looked at me.

"Lyle, what does she means by odd jobs?"

Construction work and redevelopment were progressing in Dalien. There were a lot of jobs in the city. Because the guild was looking for manpower for that, adventurers who didn’t even have weapon or equipment would take that kind of request.

They were works that weren’t like adventurer.

"……Ditch cleaning."

"……Eh?"

When I muttered that, Aria-san looked at Zelphy-san. But, Zelphy-san averted her gaze. It seemed she wouldn’t give preferential treatment of not letting Aria-san did that kind of request.

Sophia-san stood up on the spot.

"Ple, please wait! That’s not the kind of work that I’m thinking to pay back my debt with. I’m thinking something more like defeating monster or—"

Zelphy-san was staring at Sophia-san with half-closed eyes.

"Sorry but, I am the instructor of this party. In other words, I am the one demonstrating the policy to the leader Lyle. Miss, if you don’t want to do that then you can leave the party. Although, if you’re going to live as adventurer, I’ll guarantee that the experience here won’t be pointless."

Sophia-san tried to complaint, but Novem spoke out.

"Lyle-sama, please don’t worry. I will be the one working outside this time, so Lyle-sama please take the writing request in the guild during that time. It’s alright, although I look like this I’m quite strong."

Novem said that she would take the work of ditch cleaning and construction work that would be assigned to me with a smile, but the ancestors wouldn’t allow that.

[Ly, Lyle! Don’t let Novem-chan do something like that! A, Aria-chan too! No way Aria-chan can be allowed to do that kind of manual labor!]

But, the Second had a slightly different opinion.

[If Novem-chan cannot be allowed to work outside, then the other two should be treated the same too.]

The Third too had no fixation toward Aria-san and Sophia-san, but it was a different case with Novem.

[That’s right isn’t it. Well, let’s have them do their best with writing request. With these two’s noble background, they should be able to do something easy like reading and writing.]

The Fourth expressed a contradictory opinion.

[I wonder. That might be the case with Aria-chan who came from the capital nobility, but for Sophia-chan who was from vassal family of provincial noble……remember, people doing routine duties who were taken as retainer by feudal lord, a lot of that kind of people are suspect whether they can read and write or not.]

The Fifth was also of the same opinion.

[People like that are quite a lot. There are also idiots among them who said things like woman has no need for literacy.]

As for the Sixth—in the first place the ancestors starting from the Fifth and ahead weren't really fixated with Novem. They were only telling me to treasure her after she sold even her dowry for my sake.

[Well, if the instructor Zelphy decide it so, then they should follow it I guess.]

The Seventh looked frustrated.

[Damn it-! Lyle is going to do that kind of work again……this is why I hate adventurer!]

The Seventh hated adventurer and mercenary. Because of that his evaluation toward them would lower despite their actual character.

"Novem……you take the writing request."

"Why is that, Lyle-sama!? I, I can also work hard!"

Novem showed a shocked reaction, but for me it was scary how she was seriously intending to substitute me in doing the physical labor.

If Novem worked outdoor while I worked indoor……it would look like Novem was the only one working. My nickname would change from "womanizer" to "gigolo bastard". I don't want that!

Zelphy-san clapped her hands.

"Come on, it's already decided so don't be noisy. Lyle will do physical labor. The girls will do odd jobs like writing request and the like. Work properly and learn what adventurer is."

I had the feeling that Zelphy-san’s gaze toward Aria-san looked troubled. As I thought, she was worried toward Aria-san who was like a little sister to her.

.

The position of the sun was high. It was about noon when the sunlight became stronger.

I wiped my sweat with towel while looking at the two people doing physical labor. The two were sweatily loading the mud I was removing from the ditch to a wheelbarrow and then carried it away.

The First murmured with a voice that was going to break crying.

[Aria-chan……]

The Second was also speaking in astonishment.

[Sophia-chan is also a no good type huh. How should I say it, these two……they have clumsiness of different type.]

I called out to Aria-san.

"Aria-san, it’s already time for a break, let’s rest. Let’s throw the mud later. Or rather, are you alright? If it’s hard then taking other request……"

The sweaty Aria-san was relatively energetic.

"I’m fine! The smell is harsh but if I have to say I’m more suited to this kind of work!"

She was dressed in overall that really suited her for some reason. Furthermore she said she was suited to this, and certainly she was reliable with her work. In contrast, Sophia-san had a dull gaze.

"Sophia-san too, let’s rest. You don’t need to feel that down about it."

"No. I have to work hard here in exchange of my previous repeated failures……"

Repeated failures. Until yesterday, the fifth day of me doing construction work request, the two were doing requests intended for female like writing and the like under the guidance of Zelphy-san. And then the two splendidly failed those requests. Their evaluation was unbelievable E. There were five ranks of evaluation, from A to E. The lowest evaluation E would result in the adventurer given a fine.

Because of that, I who was scheduled to clean the ditch today too met up with the two. They joined me but, the two of them were more suited to this kind of work. They had more strength than the average male.

The Third was laughing.

[It’s amazing. Sophia-chan who scolded the client when doing writing request! Aria-chan who broke a lot of plate at the restaurant and punched a customer! It’s a wonder she was able to work in service industry until now.]

The two of them caused numerous trouble at the workplace where they received request.

Well, the two of them also had justification for what they did. They had but, the fine was too much and they were judged to be unsuitable for that line of work.

Honestly, I thought that even I at the beginning still did better than them.

I took off my gloves and reached out for my flask that was nearby. The two of them also took their flask while wiping their sweat. We

would rehydrate ourselves like this, but as expected the meal would wait for later with the location like this.

The ditch cleaning request would be finished in several more hours. When it’s over we would receive evaluation from the client.

Aria-san drank water then wiped her mouth with her towel.

"Zelphy doesn’t come here."

Even the instructor Zelphy-san wouldn’t keep watch of us around the clock. Or rather, right now she was busy with another matter.

The Fourth laughed a bit.

[She must be really busy cleaning up after these two around this time. Well, it’s good that she is working properly. After all it’s the job of the supervisor to take responsibility for their charge.]

The two’s failures racked up quite the number during these five days.

At the first day Sophia-san came to the guild and scolded the adventurer who asked for writing. She was asked to write something like a love letter, then apparently at the end the client told her "I want to send that to you" which enraged her.

She was writing sweet words that made one wanted to vomit sugar with bright red face, but the client was grinning seeing that. Even if it wasn’t Sophia-san it would be understandable why anyone would want to get angry.

But, a failure was a failure.

Aria-san was working in service industry before this so we figured she would be alright when she was sent to a restaurant that was

lacking staff. There a drunk middle-aged man reached out to touch her butt.

We were told that she punched the drunkard flying, broke plates, and even broke a table. That was scary. When she was sent to the kitchen, she broke several plates while washing them and the restaurant complained to the guild.

Even after that she repeatedly failed in similar ways and got sent to my place.

Because Zelphy-san was going around in order to earnestly apologized to the clients, she didn't come to monitor us here today. Even Zelphy-san surely didn't imagine that Aria-san was this terrible despite having working in service industry before.

The shop Ciel where Aria-san was working at before was a hidden shop that offered sweets to male. Thinking back now, many of the males going there to sneakily eat sweets weren't drunkard. The shop owner made Aria-san served the customers must be because she unskilled in other things than that. She was working with cute appearance, so perhaps the work there was putting importance on appearance.

The First was troubled of how to react.

[Should I feel relieved that she is staying within eyeshot, or should I lament of how she is delighted from doing physical labor, I just don't get it! Shit-! What should I do here!]

The Third immediately replied.

[You cannot do anything anyway so isn't it alright to stay quiet?]

[GODDAMN ITTTTT!!]

It felt like my unreliable mana was audibly shrinking when the First yelled. The sound couldn’t be heard but, there was no doubt that my mana was pointlessly consumed.

Perhaps inside the First the ancestor of Aria-san who was a genuine noble lady overlapped with Aria-san. Well, the First had never even talked with that ancestor of Aria-san, so it was unknown what kind of person she was.

I had a thought that perhaps she was unexpectedly similar with Aria-san.

Sophia-san sighed.

"……I will be able to achieve more if I can fight monster outside though."

I said to Sophia-san.

"No, you don’t need to be that concerned. I recovered that heirloom was also only because of the occasion."

Aria-san joined the conversation.

"Tha, that’s right! You don’t need to be that concerned about it. Or rather, you are completely not useful at all."

Sophia-san glared at Aria-san with a severe expression.

"……I don’t want to hear that from you."

"Bo, both of you, don’t glare at each other like that."

When the two of them were making such complicated atmosphere, the passerby could be heard whispering to each other. A group of three who seemed to be housewives were,

"How terrible, there will be bloodbath there, bloodbath."

"Perhaps they are ticked by his nice appearance?"

"How young."

They were passing while watching us with enjoyment. Then, there was one person who approached us. It was Zelphy-san who was making a tired expression.

"You three seems to be having great time there."

"There is nothing great about this!"

Zelphy-san shrugged when I talked back.

"My bad but we are changing the plan. The fine's amount is big no matter what. Rest for tomorrow and the day after that we will go exterminating monster outside. I also thought about paying on these two's behalf but, I guess it will be better too for them to know the reality early."

Sophia-san opened her eyes wide.

"Finally. With this I will be able to compensate for all my failure until now!"

Aria-san was also feeling rivalry toward Sophia-san.

"E, even I can do it! I had also received instruction of using spear from my house!"

Aria-san and Sophia-san were unexpectedly knowledgeable about martial arts.

I thought that it would be better if they learned more about other things though, but I didn't say it out loud. But, the Third spoke to me who was holding back from saying what I wanted to say.

[……Lyle, it's fine if you speak what you are thinking a bit more.]

The Fourth who was fussy about woman treatment and money was also of the same opinion.

[It’s no good if you make a verbal slip though. But, communication is important, Lyle.]

I stayed quiet because it felt like they would get angry if I spoke it, but was that no good?

Zelphy-san looked at the two who were conscious to each other and scratched her head.

"……Perhaps it would be better if I teach them the reality first."

The reality for the two……what did she mean by that?

.

—The next day.

Novem took Sophia for shopping.

For adventurer, going outside didn’t stop with just fighting monster. There were also a lot of tools that they would need. Aria was shopping with Zelphy, so Novem was going together with Zelphy.

There were a lot of shops that were selling necessary items for adventurer. But, the characteristic of the item would depend on the shop, so Sophia was troubled.

"The price is different even though they are similar thing. Is it the difference in quality?"

Novem nodded at Sophia.

"That’s right. I think it’s better to choose tool with a certain degree of good quality. The cheap one will break easily, and thinking about using it for long it will be more economical that way."

But, Sophia was making a slightly perplexed look.

"It’s a really big expense. I thought that the initial cost will be smaller."

Novem suggested to Sophia.

"Sophia-san, I will pay for the tools. Also, are you alright with the cost of your inn? I will also pay for it if you don’t have enough."

Sophia shook her head.

"No! There is no way I can let you do that! I, I came in order to repay my debt, there is no way I can be even more of a bother than……"

Novem spoke bluntly.

"You will be a hindrance to Lyle-sama if you are insufficiently equipped and also unable to manage your health. This is a necessary expense. Besides, it’s fine if you pay it back later. Please rely on us for now."

Sophia had overly optimistic thought about adventurer, or rather she wasn’t even aware about it. The noble of Bahnseim Kingdom had the tendency to hate becoming an adventurer.

They wouldn’t choose this path if it wasn’t for reason like their house fell into ruin, or they were the second son or third son going independent.

Sophia was also a person who didn’t think about becoming adventurer. She was a woman and thought that she would marry

into another house. But, her house was unable to protect the land that was left in their care from the feudal lord and her family died. Their position as retainer knight was also deprived from them.

"……My apologies. I will be in your debt for now."

Novem smiled.

"Yes. I will have you pay it back someday. Now, let’s go choosing the tools. There is also other shop we have to visit after this.[

Sophia was bewildered.

"We, we’re still going around shops?"

The two continued their shopping like that—.

.

The next day, at a place that was a few hours of walking from Dalien.

There I wiped the yellow green liquid that got caught on my face.

Zelphy-san was laughing while holding her stomach. Novem prepared water with her magic and wet the towels before distributing them to me, Aria-san, and Sophia-san.

Novem scolded the laughing Zelphy-san.

"Zelphy-san!"

Then Zelphy-san cleared her throat.

"My bad, don’t be that angry. But, with this you two understand right?"

Aria-san and Sophia-san looked down.

Slime—a soft and flabby monster that was like a yellow green liquid wrapped by mucous membrane. Its size was varied, but it was smaller than human. It was a monster that was easy to defeat, but right now we were covered by such slime's body fluids.

In my case, the liquid flew to my face because of the halberd that Sophia-san swung around. Aria-san too, the liquid of the slime that she stabbed with her spear showered her and greatly dirtied her.

Well, everyone other than Novem and Selphie was dirtied drippingly.

The Second briefly said.

[This is terrible.]

He muttered, and it was in fact terrible. Zelphy-san wore her gloves and took the part of slime that could be sold—the material. The transparent skin that wrapped the liquid was ragged.

"The condition is really terrible. If it's like this the price will be lower than half. Also, the core is also crumbling and cannot be sold. The magic stone also flew away somewhere……I cannot find it."

Aria-san looked like she wanted to say something, but she shut up when Zelphy-san glared at her.

"Now listen. Don't think that it's fine as long as the monster is defeated. Adventurer won't get money if they don't secure the material in a good condition. Aria!"

"Ye, yes!"

In front of Zelphy-san who was in her working mode, Aria-san too was naturally feeling nervous.

"There is no need to stab with all your strength, I taught you that before! The inside will spill out if you cut it a bit. Wait until everything spill out and then recover it! Why are you unable to do something like that!?"

Aria-san got dejected. Sophia-san glanced at her from the side, but she wasn't in a state to feel triumph.

"Sophia, you too. I told you didn't I? It's difficult to do this with that weapon."

Sophia-san kept the dirtied halberd stabbed on the ground and made an excuse in a fluster.

"Bu, but, even without carrying other weapon I—"

"Don't carry weapon that you cannot handle!"

Sophia-san was able to swing around the large battle axe, but she couldn't be said to be able to handle it. Her attack toward a slime was missing several times, and at the end she strongly swung horizontally with a great arc which caused the liquid to splatter everywhere.

"It's a weapon that you entrust your life to. You can choose whatever you like but, it's dangerous to carry a weapon that you cannot handle. Sophia, you……can you swing around that battle axe if there is ally nearby?"

Sophia-san looked down and clenched her fist.

"……I can't."

I also thought that was impossible for her. Or rather, I couldn't stand near Sophia-san. If she was careless, there was also the risk of the battle ask flying from her grip.

In front of the clumsy pair, the First murmured with a subdued voice,

[There isn’t any need to say it harshly like that. Aria-chan is also doing her best.]

That attitude was completely different from with me! Recently the First became kind, but before that he would constantly provoke me, spoke ill of me, and hurled abuse at me. And yet his attitude toward these two, or rather toward Aria-san is like this!

……I think that’s a bit unfair.

Zelphy-san turned her gaze toward me. I unsheathed my saber and entrusted my luggage to Novem who was in charge of the luggage.

I picked a fallen branch on the ground and threw it at a slime. The branch hit the slime and bounced back, then it jumped while heading toward me.

I held the saber with my right hand and moved slightly from my standing position.

When the slime passed through my former position, I lightly cut its skin with my saber. The slime became unable to move and spilled its body fluid on the ground. Red round core and red small stone—magic stone appeared on the ground.

I put on the gloves for recovering material, took out a small barrel and a leather bag from the luggage, and retrieved the materials.

"Right, this is the way adventurer fight. Do you two understand?"

Zelphy-san introduced my action as an example in front of Aria-san and Zelphy-san. ……It seemed the way I defeated it received a passing mark.

The two were dejected.

"You won't be able to save money by simply defeating monster. It's not like knights or soldiers that need only to defeat monster. Defeat the monster cleanly and retrieve the material and magic stone. You won't be able to eat as adventurer if you cannot do that. You will only keep doing odd jobs no matter how long time passed."

I looked at the two. Novem approached me.

"Lyle-sama, perhaps it will be better if you talk to the two of them later."

"……Eh?"

When I tilted my head, Novem made a troubled face.

"N, no. Talk to them and do something like encouraging them, that……there are various things."

Before, Zelphy-san told me don't help other people when you are still inexperienced yourself. Meddle in only when you are already able to stand by yourself, she said.

"……No, is that so? I thought, that it might be no good instead if I speak to them. Look, I'm also still inexperienced. Before you said to help other after becoming able to stand by myself……"

Novem was stunned. But, she seemed to recall something right away and pressed me.

"Please absolutely talk to them later. Alright? Absolutely! I'm not asking Lyle-sama to give them advice or anything. Simply say something like, do your best, even just that is fine!"

"O, okay."

I was overwhelmed by Novem's pressure and nodded, but the ancestors were also similarly surprised at me who was like that.

The First finally squeezed out his voice.

[Oi, isn't Lyle a bit strange?]

The Second was also the same.

[Yeah, I've been thinking about it since before but……]

The Third continued his words.

[He is unfamiliar with human relationship, no, it's not at that level isn't it.]

The Fourth was a bit angry.

[This is a big problem. Big problem! How did you apply that talk to this situation right now……]

The Fifth was also the same.

[They are your fellow party member. Help each other. Why are you treating it the same with the talk of helping other people?]

The Sixth was also feeling doubtful.

[Hmm, could it be this is……well, until now he is helped by Novem's quick consideration after all. We simply didn't notice, but there was a lot of place where Lyle's act was doubtful.]

The Seventh tried to cover for me but he gave up.

[……Lyle, these two aren't strangers anymore. We just talked how you are responsible for them didn't we?]

Now that he mentioned it certainly it was so, but I was told that it was ten years too early for someone inexperienced like me to help someone else.

……What was different?

The First yelled at me.

[You, you still don’t get it! Yosh, understood! Come inside the Jewel tonight! Remember, you absolutely must come!]

Aria-san and Sophia-san who were scolded by Zelphy-san. Novem who was looking uneasily at me, and I who didn’t understand the present situation……the astonished ancestors inside the Jewel.

What’s this, it felt like it returned to slightly a while ago. I couldn’t feel any progress at all from that time when I was unable to do anything and kept getting scolded.

Chapter 18 – Growth

Inside the Jewel.

Its biggest distinction was easy to notice compared to the Gem before it became Jewel.

Gem was a tool to record the Art of the user. The condition so that the Art would be recorded was that the user used the Art until its third stage. The Art would be recorded by the Gem when the condition was fulfilled.

And then, even when the owner changed, if the owner knew the "way to use Art" and the "Art's name", even a new owner would be able to use the Art from the first stage until the third stage like the previous owner.

In case the owner didn't know these two, the Gem would only teach the first stage of the Art.

However, my blue Jewel that changed from Gem into Jewel resurrected the personality of the recorded Arts' owner in the figure of their golden age and I could talk with them.

The way to use the lost Arts was taught to me directly by the ancestors. Why it could become like this? Even the ancestors didn't know why.

I was also able to send my consciousness inside the Jewel—inside the round table room.

I was able to meet the ancestors who were resurrected as memory inside the Jewel. This was the Jewel's great difference with Gem.

A round table was placed inside the rectangle room, a large blue sphere was embedded on the ceiling, and surrounding it were small

spheres embedded in radiating circle shape. Among the total of 22 gems, six were shining.

There was also a large blue gem embedded at the center of the round table. The chairs for the ancestors were placed surrounding the round table. Behind the chairs were the respective distinctive doors of the ancestors.

There was also a chair for me, but behind me there was no door—the door to memory room. Behind the doors, the memory of the ancestors was sleeping.

By entering there, I was able to watch the memory of the ancestors. But, we also didn't understand why these memory rooms existed.

In the end, what is a Jewel……there were a lot of things that we didn't understand.

The round table room.

The fourth who served as the moderator pushed up his glasses with his fingertip to fix its position while managing the meeting.

[Ee~, then, I think we should begin the meeting regarding "that's a bit strange you know, Lyle" now.]

I was more bothered with the topic name rather than the subject of the meeting but I stayed quiet.

The first one to speak was the Second.

[No, I think this isn't just a bit. Isn't this at a fatal degree? It's not normal to treat stranger and comrade equally.]

I felt ashamed at this new opinion. I was only following the teaching of my surrounding though.

The Third put his elbow on the round table and looked at me.

[Until now it didn’t stand out because he was only alone with Novem-chan or with the instructor too. Lyle is surrounded by capable people and he was at the side of getting helped.]

The Fifth whispered,

[Your capability in personal relations is catastrophic.]

The First swung down his fist on the tbale.

[Such thing doesn’t matter! Listen Lyle! Those girls are already your comrade! So to speak, they are existences who you must protect! Don’t treat them the same like stranger!]

I looked at the First.

"From my standpoint, it’s still not decided if I will accept them though……. Besides, the two of them also aren’t my lover aren’t they?"

The First messed up his hair.

[Look at Aria-chan’s behavior! She is in love with you! So make her happy! I’m begging you here so do that! Please make her happy, this bastard!]

I don’t understand whether he is begging me or ordering me.

The Sixth spoke admonishingly at me.

[Lyle, about that girl Sophia. Her house was erased, and from now on she is going to become adventurer to pay back her debt to you. Right now she isn’t useful, but she is a girl with no other place to go. It should be alright to take care of her until she is able to take care of herself at minimum. Even if you abandon her, her personality is like that. She will get tricked by bad guys.]

Sophia-san was overly serious and although not as bad as me she wasn’t knowledgeable about adventurer. Aria-san had Zelphy-san, but Sophia-san had no one nearby.

"N, now that you said it that’s true."

The Seventh was looking at me uneasily.

[Lyle, in the past aren’t you someone who was more sensitive to other people? You were also bright and lively, you could do anything……just, what happened?]

Then the Third raised his face.

[Ah, that’s also in my mind. Lyle, you……you were treated coldly in your house right? What kind of treatment did you receive?]

The Third showed interest at my treatment, but the others didn’t look like that. Although I called it a cold treatment, they were surely able to imagine it in general already.

"……I think it’s just like everyone imagine. Err, it was when I was around ten years old. Since I received a saber as my birthday present I think?"

From there I talked about my treatment at my house to the ancestors.

But, the ancestors’ faces were turning pale before my eyes.

Since I got treated coldly, the place of my livelihood was limited only my room—and the garden that I used to train.

My meals were brought to my room. After I finished eating, the utensils would be taken by the servant when they came bringing the next meal.

The private tutor only handed me books. They didn’t really teach me anything, I read those books in my room and studied by myself.

I never talked with anyone. —If there was something, I would only be told indifferently and I also never conversed with my family. Even when I talked to them I would get ignored. Thinking back now, it was only Novem who would call out to me when she came to check on me sometimes.

No, I also had memory of getting knocked around by the young retainers.

Come to think of it, there was a time when I forced myself too much and my health broke down. There wasn’t any particular change even at that time. No doctor came, and I also didn’t receive any medicine.

……Until then. Until I was ten years old if I’m not mistaken……I can’t remember. The hazy memory of kind parents, the time when I received the saber, and then playing with my family……. I could recall until there but, no other memory came out.

I held my head with both hands and felt something was out of place. I couldn’t recall it in detail.

"……Eh? It feels like something is strange."

I couldn’t recall my own memory at all. The Sixth yelled at me who thought of that as strange.

[That’s totally strange! Brod, did you really raise Maizel correctly huh! Because this is impossible! This is already a genuine life of house arrest!]

The Sixth who grabbed the collar of the Seventh mentioned father's name. For the Sixth father was his grandson, but I heard that the relationship of father and the Sixth was cold.

The Seventh was also confused.

[N, no, I never thought that it would be this bad! E, even I didn't imagine that Lyle would receive that kind of treatment!]

It seemed the me that the Seventh knew was loved and anticipated by my family and also by the retainers. I said seemed because for me it already felt like something that happened to other person.

The Second sweated.

[They treated the eldest son like that. Or rather, that's not a treatment for a child. Even the livelihood of second son and lower living at home is still far better than that. ……Well, I don't really know how other house is though.]

The Fourth was also a bit bewildered.

[It's far surpassed my imagination that I don't know what to say. Furthermore, even the retainers were lying their hand, that's not normal.]

The Fifth was staying silent. But, his eyes were looking at me with a complicated expression, then he hid his face with his hand.

"Eh? Err? ……That treatment, is really that terrible?"

The Third laughed drily.

[Yep. Other than you not getting thrown out, everything else is the worst. It's far too terrible than what we imagined, to the degree that I can't get angry to Lyle right now.]

The First folded his arms with a serious face, then he looked at me.

[……Lyle, did you ever get troubled with hunger?]

"Ne, never. They at least properly brought me food."

Then the First spoke with a small voice.

[I see. At least there is that.]

The Fourth clapped his hand, then the Seventh who got his collar grabbed was released and everyone sat down.

[Yes. Then, now that the cause why Lyle is more hopeless than expected has been cleared, let’s think constructively about the future from now. In fact, it’s important for Lyle to learn various things with this as a chance. Let’s make use of this chance as much as we can.]

The Fifth slightly shrugged.

[Regarding Lyle’s ignorance of the world, It’s fine to change our perception of him from “he won’t get it unless he is told” to “he will understand if he is told”. Rather we can consider Lyle as doing better if he is in this state even after receiving that kind of treatment in his emotional period.]

Then, the Seventh turned a sad expression toward me.

The sudden change of attitude from the ancestors made me felt scared instead. Was it really that terrible? For me that was normal.

Somehow, it felt hard to stay here. Then the Fourth switched the topic.

[Then let’s decide about our plan going forward. Look, about Lyle’s combat style.]

Apparently they talked about my combat style.

The Third snapped his finger.

[That's right! This is only perhaps but, Lyle might be a specialized type. You know, that dexterity he displayed when he fought with the leader-kun of the bandit group before this, I think it was really amazing.]

I tilted my head.

"……Dexterity?"

The Second was a bit exasperated. Gaze was directed at the Fourth.

[No, why didn't you get it? Look, it's that time when you used two sword style with saber and short sword. That was skillful even from our view. Even us, if we have to do something like that perhaps that's impossible……]

The Fourth slightly straightened his back.

[There is only me huh. But, my two sword style used two short swords. As expected it's impossible to use two sword style with saber.]

"……We have two arms, so I think it's possible to do it though?"

The Sixth rubbed the corner of his eye with his fingertip.

[That thinking is already strange. Normally a person has dominant arm. Well, from the amount of your mana reserve, no matter how you thought about it you are a type who goes through "growth" extremely in one part.]

The Second folded his arms and nodded several times.

[Your mana reserve is small, but it isn't bad to grow specialized. In fact, rather than growing with half-baked rate at everything, it's

easier to decide your own style like this, after all there won't be any hesitation. What you can and cannot do are made clear.]

I felt discomfort listening to the conversation of the ancestors. Certainly, the current me often ran out of mana. But, I had the perception that previously I had mana reserve at the big side.

I fell into mana insufficiency should be due to this cursed tool called Jewel that was sucking my mana, not because I had little mana reserve.

Putting that aside, I was really curious about the word "growth" that came out in this conversation. When I silently raised my hand, the Fourth said [Yes, Lyle] as permission for me to speak. The seven people's gazes gathered on me.

"Err……what is this "growth" everyone mentioned?"

Everyone froze.

Did I say something that terrible just now?

.

……Speaking from the conclusion, apparently I was really ignorant of the world.

[That's impossible! If anyone live normally, a "growth" will absolutely have come already at least once at Lyle's age!]

The second messed up his hair in confusion, then the First confirmed it to me.

[Lyle, did nothing ever happen to you while living your days? You know, a feeling like *pikkiiin!*. Your health will suddenly get worse, and then after staying in bed that sensation will come!]

The Third hid half his face with his left hand while pondering.

[Eh? Isn't the sensation felt like *buwah–*? Leaving that aside, in Lyle's case he was in house arrest, so perhaps he earned few experience? You know, various life experience is necessary for growth after all.]

Growth—that was a phenomenon that occurred in order to advance to the next level.

Apparently at first the body condition would become worse. After that, the body's condition would become good or something as though the sickness was a lie. There was a also a lot of cases where people could do what they couldn't do before by experiencing growth.

About that growth, apparently by simply living normally people would at least experience it once by the time they were my age.

Growth would happen two or three times in peaceful life. It was said that people fighting monster like knight, soldier, or adventurer would experience it five or sixth times.

Because of that, it was said that growth would come faster by fighting monster apparently. Apparently, because I never heard something like this until now.

The Seventh pondered.

[In Lyle's case, the environment around him was bad. For something like this, most time the family would stay quiet about it until that time come, and after the growth the family would watch over the person smirkingly. That's the norm but……]

Apparently the person's mood would be uplifted after growth and they would cause blunder. The family would watch that attentively while smirking. Apparently that was the normal custom.

What an unpleasant custom.

The Second looked at me.

[Wait. Lyle who didn’t even know about growth and never felt any sensation like *shakiiin!* has this much ability without any growth or experience? Even though he also can use magic!?]

Magic was greatly influenced by bloodline, magician was considered as noble because it was magician that created the class called nobility. But at present, it was the family lineage of baron house and above that was befitting when mentioning magician at the real meaning.

The houses with lower status like baronet or knight peerage could only use several magic.

But, the bloodline of magician spread widely and not just between the nobility. There were other people who weren’t noble able to use magic was because of that.

Well, the like of magician was in a fickle position. From the view point of noble, magician other than noble was fake. From other point of view, as long as someone could use magic than they were magician.

No, right now the matter regarding magic was inconsequential.

"I had nothing but time, so I trained quite a lot in magic too."

Then the Sixth was exasperated at me.

[That’s not we are talking about. Lyle, you can use magic before your growth. This is something really amazing.]

It seemed talent was necessary to use magic that had high difficulty before experiencing growth. In other words, I had that talent.

But, not everything was good news. The Fifth made a difficult expression.

[Lyle is that isn't he. The type that can be found sometimes. The type whose growth is extremely slow……the recoil will be big or the ability will grow drastically in many aspects when the growth comes for this type.]

It sounded good from the content of the talk, but everyone around me was holding their head.

The Second was troubled.

[That kind will rarely appear huh. That type will also blunder a lot. Because they become stronger drastically, a lot of time they will be conceited after their growth even when they tried to stay calm. They are the type that died young.]

That's an unpleasant type. From what the Second said, after the growth they would suddenly become able to do what they couldn't do before, which caused their feeling to be uplifted. Even if they tried to calm down they would fail a lot.

They would be conceited too, but it would be mostly them wanting to investigate how much their current self could do. Like that many of this type of people would measure their own strength wrongly, and a lot of time that failure would connect to their death.

The First listened to the surrounding's opinion, while,

[Well, it's that! Anyway, you will experience growth if you do many thing. Defeat lots and lots of monster from now. If there is dungeon nearby then it will be even quicker.]

The Second lifted his face.

[That’s it! Lyle, challenge a dungeon! If you do that it will be faster. After all dungeon is like a training place in order to achieve growth.]

"Eh? Dungeon, isn’t it a place that is scary or troublesome?"

Dungeon was a place that was like distortion in space that was naturally appearing. At the same time, it was said that the dungeon itself was “alive”.

In order to invite people to enter, treasure was placed at the place that was called the dungeon’s deepest room. That was the metal that was emitting mana. Even if it was copper, if it was emitting mana then it was rare metal. It became precious material for magic tool.

Also depending on the dungeon’s type, there would be monster inside, and also troublesome monster called floor boss protecting each level.

Monster would come to kill if people entered.

Human was food for dungeon, dead human would be absorbed by the dungeon it seemed. It was a really dangerous place, but the quality and quantity of the treasure in the deepest room was great depending on the size of the dungeon. It was a place that people aimed for and risked their life at.

And then, dungeon would dry out when the treasure at the deepest room was taken. By drying out it meant that the dungeon died.

It was like dungeon was alive. That was why, challenging such dungeon was called “growing”.

……And then, the most troublesome thing was a dungeon that wasn’t visited by anyone and monster was overflowing inside it. In that case a lot of monsters would be released from the dungeon.

In regard of such troublesome dungeon, it felt like the reaction of the ancestors was a bit off.

[Dungeon huh. It’s nice!]

[It’s nice isn’t it. The treasure at the deepest room can be used for magic tool, and we also can get money if they are sold.]

[You can obtain money and it’s also training for you.]

[Everyone will be scrambling to challenge it when one is found!]

[As expected we don’t have the knowhow to manage one, but if it’s only defeating one then we have so much knowhow it will make you fed up. Dungeon is easy money.]

The Third until the Seventh also had strange sense of values regarding dungeon. Normally, it became the feudal lord’s responsibility to subjugate a dungeon when one appeared in their territory. There was also cases where it was entrusted to the guild, even so I heard that subjugating one would cause quite a damage.

"Say, I heard that dungeon is really troublesome, and I thought I cannot participate in the subjugation at Dalien."

Previously, a second dungeon appeared at Dalien. No, even now manpower was gathered and the subjugation of that dungeon was still in progress even now. Depending on the dungeon, subjugating it could take from a few weeks until a few months.

When the second dungeon appeared, I told Hawkins-san that I won’t participate. At that time, my party consisted only of me and Novem. The instructor Zelphy-san at the end was an instructor and not a comrade.

Everyone was at their wits’ end. Like that they all were talking in disappointment.

[Dammit, even though that's a good idea.]

[A dungeon is a place to test one's skill. Don't put limitation on it.]

[Other than this there is only the plain method……]

[It will become money though. It's regretful.]

[Aria and Sophia has only joined up too……certainly it will be difficult for them.]

[The number of people is the bottleneck.]

[At our era we could gather manpower ourselves after all. Lyle right now is lacking manpower. It's overwhelmingly insufficient.]

It seemed they gave up, but why are they this disappointed……. I couldn't understand the ancestors' sense of values.

Then, the First talked nostalgically of the past.

[You know, at my era there was undeveloped area stretching out nearby, there was a forest there. A labyrinth appeared there……]

The First reminisced deeply, but his next words were terrible.

[……That dungeon, even when we cut the trees they will grow back right away. In addition the trees would grow big immediately and we chopped down lots of lots of wood for the village's raw material and also to sell. It was awesome!]

It was awesome! Not. This person, what was he doing with a dungeon?

The Second complained, but as expected his complain was off.

[It was because you rashly subjugate even the dungeon, that we lost the precious forestry resource! Give it back! Return back my plan damn you!]

[You dare saying “damn you” to your father! Get outside, you shitty brat!]

The First and the Second started punching each other again.

The talk deviated, so the Fourth clapped his hand and declared the meeting was over.

[Well, let’s finish here for today. Lyle too, let’s work hard together too from tomorrow. Especially at various things about human relations……especially woman relations.]

The Fourth looked serious and his glasses glinted. This person was also problematic on his own way, why was he this fussy about money and woman relations?

.

The next day after my consciousness left the Jewel.

Because we had just returned from going outside the city, today was a holiday for us.

But, I alone had a business so I came to the guild at the morning. Although, my business wasn’t at the first and second floor.

The guild had a reference room. Adventurer could make use of it. A lot of the data there was regarding monster and dungeon. There was also the documents the guild kept in reserve.

What kind of monster was there, what kind of incident happened. I could investigate various things here.

Other than that there was also data that could be obtained anywhere. It was the Second who mentioned about going to look for data. The Third who loved book was also in agreement, so today I decided to go to the reference room.

When I entered the room, the unique scent of book filled the inside. The smell of paper and ink. Also dust……the place must be cleaned, but it seemed it wasn’t done that frequently.

I entered the room and gathered several documents, then I sat down on a chair and opened a book. I flipped the page then the Second spoke.

[Lyle, fast! You are flipping the page too fast! Can you read like that?]

Being told that I flipped the page too fast, I slowly opened the page. The ancestors could also see the scenery outside through me.

The Third read the data and it seemed he felt something was out of place.

[Lyle, when was this document written?]

When I looked at the cover, from the year……it was from a hundred years ago.

It was really old, but there was also document that was even older than this. I looked around and opened my mouth after confirming that there wasn’t anyone else.

"It’s mainly from a hundred years ago."

[……Lyle, you can read it?]

"Well, it’s a bit difficult though."

Sometimes the phrasing would also puzzle me, but I could somehow read it. Then, the Second seemed to notice something.

[I see. So the words we are saying are adjusted to suit Lyle. I thought it was strange.]

Strange? The Second didn’t say anything more and only urged me to flip the page. I found a bit strange description inside the document that summarized the data regarding the monsters that were often found around Dalien.

"……Orc subspecies? Purple skin and ability to spit venom. I never heard of something like that."

I didn’t know there was any monster like that.

Orc fundamentally would appear anywhere. It had pig head and two fangs jutted out from its lower jaw. Its legs were thick and short. Its arms were long, reaching until the ground. Its skin was said to be brown. They would carry weapon and I heard there were also some among them that would wear helm.

They were humanoid and would think more than other monster. They were aggressive toward human.

Then the Second murmured.

[It’s not subspecies. Even among monsters there are some that goes through growth.]

The Third continued the Second’s explanation.

[A few of that kind of monster can also have Art. Lyle, do you know? Seven goddess created this world. And then they granted magic and Art for the sake of us weak human. Growth is also considered as one of the blessings.]

The Second snorted.

[There isn’t such thing. Well, I won’t say it out loud because the priest will get angry, but whether human or monster, they all equally grow and also manifest Art. Besides, there is even monster that use magic.]

The goddesses equally bestowed their blessing to human and monster.

In this world that worshipped the goddesses, they were considered as mankind's ally. Because of that, surely people didn't want to recognize that monster possessed the same blessing like human.

The Third laughed.

[Anyone want to think that they are special. It's a good thing. But, I wish they won't force their belief on other. That's why, people have no choice but to write in this way, that there is a subspecies. Feudal lords of the frontier like us has a lot of chance to encounter something like this no matter how we dislike it. I wish they would report accurate information.]

Frontier—in the past the territory of Walt House, Vise was called a frontier. But, right now it was a territory that was really developed even in Bahnseim Kingdom.

I heard that at the era of the First until the Third, it was a difficult period where even the head of the house at that time was personally plowing the farm.

"Then, the religion of this country right now is no good?"

[Eh, why?]

I felt puzzled hearing the Third's voice. Even though just now he was saying negative thing about it.

The Second spoke in exasperation at me.

[Lyle, we too are also worshipping the goddess. Err, if I remember right……it's the goddess faith that treat the seven as equal rank.]

The Third was also of the same opinion.

[Aa, depending on the region the goddesses could be ranked superiorly or inferiorly too each other wasn’t it. At other county the major goddess was the seventh goddess I think? She is the merciful goddess that bestowed blessing to human they said. Honestly speaking, I think it’s fine even if they don’t rank the goddesses or anything though.]

"No, that……just now, didn’t you talk about not writing something like this or that the priest will get angry……"

Then the Third laughed.

[Lyle is really stupid. It’s not like the religion itself is bad, there are even priests who are extremely benevolent. There are also wicked priests though. Well, there are also people who are complaining about this kinda thing. It’s not like that is limited only to priest after all.]

I felt the Second nodded.

[Everywhere you go there will be good guys and also bad guys. Well, a lot of time the bad part will be more standing out.]

The Third made fun of me.

[Lyle, could it be you are the type who cannot forgive this kind of thing? If you are already that stiff for this, you will get tired going through society.]

The Second said to me.

[It’s also no good if you become carefree like this guy though.]

The Third said his opinion to the Second.

[Eh? You are saying that? If I have to say the second is also a stiff person too. Wasn’t it terrible for you after you grew old?]

[That was because you changed my plan as you pleased wasn’t it!]

The two became noisy, so I read the continuation of the document.

What I understood once more after going to the outside world, was how ignorant I am of the world.

But, there were the ancestors who were teaching me who was like that, although……aren’t they themselves extremely off from the common convention? It was the fact that I was holding such doubt like that.

Chapter 19 – The Dragon Slayer

At the first floor of the guild it was bustling under the light source hanging on the ceiling.

The adventurers were selling the monster material they obtained, while the merchants were buying up those. There were also the average citizen coming here purchasing material from merchant or adventurer.

Our party—me, Novem, Aria-san, and Sophia-san who were led by Zelphy-san were showing and selling materials to a merchant while under her watch.

"Excuse me, we want to sell."

The merchant looked not at me but turned his gaze to Zelphy-san first before looking at me and making a smile.

"A lot of them are in bad condition. If it's like this their price will be cheap even if there are a lot of them. Besides, recently the price is going down. They only barely worth two silvers I think."

The price decreased? Previously we brought fewer amount than this and they were still sold with the price of two silver coins and a bit more.

"Then, that's fi—"

"Oi"

Zelphy-san stopped me. The merchant was also laughing.

"Lad, as merchant we will be happy if you believe anything we say but, you should negotiate a bit. It makes me feels bad like this."

The Fourth's slightly strict voice came from inside the Jewel.

[Lyle, at this kind of time you can just say that there is also other merchant so you will try at another place. If it’s me I’ll be able to sell it for three silver coins!]

No, I’m not the Fourth so that’s impossible for me. Then, the Third laughed.

[Isn’t it fine. Failure is also an important experience. Let’s watch over him more.]

Then the First spoke between them.

[If you want more money you can just defeat more monster isn’t it?]

As always he only had brute force approach in mind.

Zelphy-san talked to the merchant.

"We defeated thirty. It shouldn’t be a bad transaction for you too with that many gathered like this right?"

The merchant laughed.

"You ain’t wrong. I’ll give you two silver coins and twenty large copper coins then."

"Thirty coins!"

"Twenty five coins!"

The two bargained like that and at the end Zelphy-san secured two silver coins and twenty five silver coins.

We accepted the silver and large copper coins, and then we immediately headed to the guild staff’s place in order to sell the magic stones.

Zelphy-san looked around while speaking.

"That uncle can still be talked with. There is also other more terrible person than him, so let’s try to sell there next time. There will be difference depending on the region too, but this kind of bargaining can be applied anywhere. Also, don’t completely believe a merchant’s words. Understand?"

I nodded to her words. Then we lined up in a line where adventurers were queuing, then Zelphy-san also talked to Novem and others.

"You three too, it’s no good if you leave everything to Lyle. Everyone have to be able to do something like this. Learn it properly okay?"

And then Zelphy-san’s gaze returned to me.

"Also, this is a good timing. Look at the guy in the front."

Ahead of my gaze, there was an adventurer trying to bargain about the magic stone transaction with the guild staff.

"Come on, please. If it’s forty large copper coins, it will be fine if you make it into a silver coin right?"

"I’m telling you, I cannot do such thing. The buying price is fixed!"

Zelphy-san talked to me while watching the conversation of the two.

"Remember this Lyle. Tax is also taken from magic stone transaction. That’s the way of Dalien. And then, the guild staff isn’t a merchant. That’s why you cannot negotiate the price with them."

The queuing adventurers were getting irritated while watching the adventurer who was in the middle of bargaining.

The standpoint of merchant who was purchasing material and the guild that was handling the magic stone was different.

"I'll keep it in mind."

Saying that, I waited until my turn came.

.

—The girls left the first floor of the guild and headed toward the nearby bathhouse.

Their body and equipment were dirtied by slime liquid, and they were also sweaty. There was also mud and the like dirtying them. They were really in a horrible state.

Many adventurers would clean themselves after selling material and magic stone at the guild.

Novem, Aria, and also Sophia were led by Zelphy to soak themselves in the bathtub at the bathhouse.

"Aah, this moment really is the best. Putting down the luggage and heading to the bar after this is also the best. You girls, are you drinking?"

Novem shook her head. Aria didn't really have good impression toward alcohol so she looked down. It was because her father was living a life of drinking every day.

On the contrary Sophia didn't think anything of it. She wasn't but…….

"You mean like the wine used in cooking?"

Zelphy pressed her head with her hand.

"That's not drinking, it's only for use of cooking there."

Around the four who were soaking inside the bathtub there were also other female adventurers cleaning themselves. They had sunburn skin. Damaged hair. There were also many scars on their body. Zelphy was also the same.

On the contrary the skin of Novem and the other two were white and pretty.

Just from that the surrounding judged that the three of them were novice. But, Zelphy was with them so no one tried anything strange like picking a quarrel.

One female adventurer approached near Zelphy.

"Nee-san, so it’s true that you are doing babysitting job."

The female adventurer who was Zelphy’s acquaintance had slender figure. She had a towel wrapped on her head, but her body was completely exposed.

The surrounding was in similar state.

"That’s right. I’m not gonna let you try anything with them okay?"

"There isn’t anyone who’ll go against Nee-san here in Dalien. More importantly, can I ask you one thing?"

"What?"

The female adventurer turned her gaze at Novem and the other two.

"The one Nee-san is teaching is that “womanizer” guy isn’t it?"

Apparently she was asking about Lyle. Novem was soaking herself in the bathtub while focusing her ear. Aria too also seemed curious.

Surely she wanted to know what the surrounding thought about Lyle. As for Sophia she seemed to only care about paying back her debt. She didn’t show any interest to Lyle’s nickname and woman relationships.

"……Yeah."

"Ah, as I thought! I want to ask a bit. Is that guy amazing at night just as expected? You know, he look like he can’t hurt a fly but he don’t let any woman around him get away from him through that way, or something! Which is it?"

As expected even Sophia also blushed hearing that. Aria became bright red and looked toward Novem. But, Novem was smiling calmly at her and shook her head.

When the talk became a dirty talk, the surrounding female adventurers were also listening. Zelphy sighed.

"You, that’s not something you should ask so brazenly."

"Isn’t it fine, Nee-san won’t lose anything from answering it. Besides, it’s becoming a topic even at my party. This is the kind of story that make everyone heated up."

The reason why male adventurer didn’t harbor romantic emotion toward their fellow adventurer of the opposite sex—that was the female adventurer’s masculine transformation. In case where a party was staying somewhere overnight for a job, there would be time where they would be unable to take a bath. They wouldn’t be able to take care of their skin or hair.

There would also be case where male and female couldn’t take action separately, where the female couldn’t help from showing their skin in front of their comrades. Because of that, their sense of shame was fading.

If it was young male adventurer then perhaps they would get stimulated, but if the female group didn’t even look embarrassed when doing that, then before anyone knew it their comrades would also perceive the females not as woman but as comrade.

Naturally, the females also grew to be able to do dirty talk.

When that happened, a lot of the male adventurers would become unable to consider their fellow adventurer of the opposite sex as woman no matter what.

"It’s because you’re like this that man ran away from you."

"Nee-san is cruel! Just because you had caught for yourself an ordinary person who don’t know anything!"

Zelphy stood up and pointed her finger at the female adventurer and spoke loudly. Water splashed and caught Sophia’s face. Sophia wiped it with her hand.

"Don’t say it like it’s something scandalous! It’s fine if you just give up chasing after a man of the same profession and look at other place!"

The other side also stood up and argued.

"I don’t like anyone weak! Besides, there were also cases of marriage between fellow adventurer!"

The two who were arguing and the female adventurers at the surrounding who were watching them while cackling. They didn’t have this thing called shame.

Sophia looked around her and muttered.

"Good grief. They should have a bit more shame."

Aria also agreed with that opinion as expected.

"Yo, you’re right. I also cannot understand this atmosphere."

But, only Novem thought of something different.

(Unexpectedly these two might get infected by this atmosphere soon though.)

She thought—.

.

I who was holding on the luggage near the bathhouse’s entrance was killing time by watching the people walking on the street at night.

"The four of them are slow."

I cleaned myself and soaked in the bathtub, but I got bothered by the gaze of my surrounding and left early. Now I’m waiting for the girl’s group here.

The Fourth said to me.

[It’s because woman takes their time at various things. Lyle, make sure to not show it on your face. Women are sharp. They will snap at us no question asked if we showed even a little bit of dissatisfaction.]

The Fifth snorted at the Fourth.

[Fitting words for a certain hen-pecked husband.]

The inside of the Jewel was enveloped in a tense atmosphere again, so I sighed while staring at the town.

Adventurers were leaving the bathhouse’s entrance, met up with their comrades who were waiting outside and returned back. There were people who had smiling face, and also people who looked dejected.

It was clear from a glace which one had good or bad earning. There were also people in a daze among them. There were also adventurers who headed to the guild after taking a bath.

There were also adventurers who only borrowed the place to wash equipment and tools in the bathhouse before returning. Various kinds of people were coming and going one after another.

And then, the four with Zelphy-san who looked like in a bad mood came out.

They were holding their luggage and dressed more lightly compared to when going out of the city. They were giving sweet smell faintly. Besides, the appearance of the four made my heart beat slightly faster.

The seven people inside the Jewel were getting excited. Everyone was male, so they often talked about sexual topic like this.]

[Adventurer is nice isn't it. As I thought their waist is great.]

[Ee~, not their butt? In that area, among these four it's Novem-chan who is the best I think?]

[You don't get it. Breast and butt are just decoration. Slender body is the best!]

[Balance is important right?]

[It's breast. Breast! In that aspect, Novem and Sophia have a big one.]

[For me it's the nape of the neck……Sophia who usually hide her skin by wearing robe has a nice nape.]

Why do I have to listen to the preference of my ancestors? This was a topic that the girls mustn't hear no matter what.

Sophia-san who didn’t expose her skin with her robe bundled her hair after taking a bath. Certainly her nape was visible. My heart beat slightly harder.

Aria-san too was dressed lightly and exposed a lot of skin. It’s troubling where to look at her body.

"What?"

"What’s the matter Lyle?"

Sophia-san and Aria-san noticed my gaze. Inside the Jewel the ancestors were passionately conversing about their preference. It seemed they had no time to give me advice.

[Stupid idiot! Aria-chan’s breast has a future! There is possibility that it will grow bigger!]

[At her age even if it become bigger, it won’t be able to surpass Novem or Sophia. Knowing when to give up is also important, First.]

The First and the Sixth heatedly argued about woman’s breast. I absolutely don’t want to listen to this kind of conversation.

"N, no, it’s nothing."

Then Zelphy-san shouldered her luggage and told us to return. Zelphy-san needed to report to the guild, so she returned there.

"Now then, we are finished for today. It’s holiday for you tomorrow, but take care to not be late the day after tomorrow. Then, I’ll return to the guild."

The four of us watched Zelphy-san left, the Novem approached me. She had the sweet scent from just taking a bath.

"Lyle-sama, do you want to eat outside after we put our luggage?"

There was a dining hall at the inn we are using, but Novem recommended to eat outside. No, isn't it eating outside even when eating at the inn? Such trivial thing surfaced in my mind but I nodded at Novem.

"Outside? If that's what Novem said then fine."

"Yes. We have finally formed an adventurer party, so I'm thinking for us to have group gathering around here and deepen our relationship."

Certainly, until now all of us would go our own way after we finished with the work. Aria-san was staying in an inn that Zelphy-san recommended, while Sophia-san was also staying in a different inn from us.

There was also party with the members staying under the same roof. That way would be more efficient, but as expected a lot of adventurer wanted privacy.

Besides, there was also party where the relationship of the members was strictly professional.

If pushed to say, our party is close to be a party with simple working relationship. After all the number of our comrades had just suddenly increased.

We didn't understand how to get along with each other. We didn't understand the proper sense of distance in a relationship.

"I, guess. It might be good to do that occasionally."

Aria-san played with her hair while blushing slightly. Did she feel dizzy after taking a bath? Sophia-san was looking indifferent.

"Then, let's decide where to meet and when."

Novem looked a bit troubled at Sophia-san who was like that, but we talked with them and decided the meeting place and the time.

.

We chose a bustling restaurant and finished our meal before breaking up.

No, I said breaking up but I did escort them home and now I was walking with Novem on the street at night to return to our inn. A saber was hanging on my waist for precaution just in case.

Dalien was considered to have good public order, but I still cannot let my guard down. We chose street with many people and bright lighting as much as possible while walking back.

Novem spoke to me.

"The cooking today was delicious. It feels fresh to taste different seasoning than the usual."

"Right."

"But, we didn’t really talk with each other. That’s a bit unfortunate."

"It was our first time, wasn’t that normal?"

"I wish that we can get along a bit more with each other though."

Novem’s troubled smile made felt like I was being criticized somehow. Would it be better if I conversed with the others more skillfully?

The Fourth’s dissatisfied voice came from inside the Jewel.

[Haa, Lyle……you shouldn’t wait for the other party to talk to you, you should take initiative to start the talk more……]

The First interrupted the Fourth.

[……Somehow, the meals here are always extravagant. No matter where you go the food will have more variety and quantity compared to my era. And yet the price is also cheap. Is this the norm right now?]

It was the Sixth who answered him.

[Various things had entered into Bahnseim after all. The farming method changed, and then potato also entered this country and the amount of harvest also increased. I heard that compared to in the past, the number of populace that can be supported also doubled.]

Certainly it as written in book that with the improvement of farming method and introduction of crop that could be raised even in an infertile land, the food situation was improved. It was also written that since that time development like magic tool and the like was also progressing.

The Fifth talked nostalgically.

[At my era, or rather it was also included in the era of the Fourth. Well, thanks to a certain someone who created various special products and worked hard to earn money, our financial situation could hold on somehow.]

The Fourth explained proudly.

[The price of food will decrease if the production increase after all. I worked hard trying various things.]

The Fourth's skill in domestic affairs was evaluated highly, but to think that in reality he was a person who was noisy when it came to money……no, perhaps he succeeded in domestic affairs because he was that kind of person.

The Fourth muttered. His voice sounded happy somewhere inside.

[I see. Right now you can eat till your stomach is full if you want it.]

The Second muttered with a slightly complicated expression.

[Well, that's because we worked hard at our era. Let's just feel glad that our descendants don't need to go through such hardship.]

The Fourth spoke with a bit tired look.

[But, thanks to that another different problem appeared.]

The First spoke once more.

[Even so, it's better than going hungry. ……Lyle, give me a bit of your time for a bit too today.]

I received summon from the First.

.

Inside the Jewel.

It was the memory room of the First. We passed through the door behind the chair of the First in the round table room, there the scenery of a village somewhere stretched out.

It was a place that really suite the word tranquil. Mother nature spread out at the surrounding.

The First walked in front of me and muttered with a voice that was audible to me while looking at such scenery.

[It was after around ten years passed. At that time, I made the savage tribe around this area to follow me. Look, it's those guys over there. They got taught how to do farming work. Those guys could only hunt, but when winter came they said that they got no food. Then plow the field, I told them with a punch.]

Certainly, at the direction the First pointed at, there was a group with difference clothing than the villagers.

They were listening about farming with a troubled face while holding hoe.

However, I think it’s not just my imagination that the First looked more like a savage tribe.

"The scale of the village has become really big isn’t it?"

The First scratched his head hearing my words.

[Well, at first it was only the scale of around a hundred people, but certainly the number increased yeah. The number of brat also increased, the surrounding savage tribes followed me……was it three or four hundred? But you know, most of these guys were hunter who never plowed a field. They were reliable when monster or bandit came, but other than that they really couldn’t do anything.]

The First must have it hard. Savage tribe—people who weren’t under the rule of Bahnseim Kingdom until now were plowing the field with trouble.

[I went independent in order to marry my first love Alice-san. But you know, there was also another reason.]

"Another reason?"

[Yeah, that’s right. I was the third son of a capital noble. A spare of the spare of the heir. Do you get it?]

I looked down, unable to guess what the First wanted to tell me. But, the First laughed.

[Don’t mind it! You only have a single little sister after all. Well, it’s that. The treatment I got was rough. I don’t know who got it worse though, you who was never troubled of getting to eat or me.]

It seemed when the First was young, his treatment was rough compared to his two older brothers. Besides, he lived in a situation where they were troubled of what to eat and he still remembered his hunger at that time even now.

[When I was little, I would go outside with the brats in the neighborhood to go outside and defeated monster, then brought the magic stone to the guild. It was to fill my stomach even for a little bit. When my parents knew what I did they punched me. They called me a “disgrace”. In Bahnseim, you will get looked down even if you were only copying adventurer. It was also an extreme era.]

Walt House at that time, even if they called themselves a capital noble but their peerage rank was the lowest, and they also had no official post in government.

Even their income must be scarce. Capital noble would receive annuity from the palace. But, a house without official position couldn’t receive that much. Even a noble house with inheritable title would have difficult life if they didn’t have any official post.

[I wanted to eat until I’m full. That was why, when I decided to become a feudal lord, I wanted to have a lot of farms so I could eat till I’m full.]

However, the reality was different. The First subdued the savage tribe with his fist, it must be really hard to make them raise crops.

[When I became able to eat a little better, my house in the capital told me to give them money, give them food. The savage tribes I gathered also started to complain that it’s better to hunt rather than farming. No one would damn listen to what I said.]

I looked around at the scenery and got a question.

"Eh? But, the scenery looks like it’s going well though?"

The First turned only his face to look at me.

[Yeah, it’s because of this.]

The surrounding was dyed grey and the scenery changed. The scenery became a place that was laid waste. The farm was trampled by the front leg of a gigantic monster.

It had four legs and a head that was like a large boulder. The monster that raised its head and roared was a land dragon that didn’t have the ability to fly—it was said that among monsters that were called dragon, this was a type that was relatively easy to defeat.

But, the preface was that it was relatively easy to defeat compared to other dragons.

Its upper body was muscular and sturdy, while its lower body was thin and small. If the upper body and the lower body were detached, the parts would look like they came from different monsters.

It had grey color and rugged skin. And then what was distinctive about it was its head which had shape that was called hammer head.

The surrounding scenery was starting to be colored and the land dragon charged forward to trample the village.

"It’s bigger than what I read in book. Also, I heard that normally its more brown and yet……could it be, a subspecies!?"

The First declared in respond to my words.

[You think I know about that! But, at that time what was in my mind was—]

While watching, the armed savage tribe and villagers were getting sent flying by the dragon. Crying voice and scream resounded through the village.

There, the First—Basil came shouldering a single edge great sword that looked like a lump of iron. The size of the subspecies land dragon looked to be more than thirty meter from its head until its tail.

In front of such gigantic monster, Basil laughed.

He laughed, and then—.

[This guy is my prey. You guys don’t get involved!]

He held his great sword with both hands and took a stance. The size of the great sword was almost as big as the First’s own body. Just what was he thinking that he created a weapon like this……no, a weapon suddenly came to mind.

"Is it a <ruby>Zanbato<rt>horse beheading sword</rt></ruby>? I once saw it in a book."

It was a weapon to bisect a knight along with the horse the knight was riding on. Few people could handle it, on top of that it was really heavy so even transporting it was hard.

The First grinned.

[It was cheap, so I bought it.]

Its length was like an adult human, and its width also easily more than 60 centimeter. It was also quiet thick. It made me wanted to question the craftsman why they created weapon like this.

But, when Basil took a stance holding that lump of iron with both hands and slashed at the land dragon, the enemy’s charge stopped.

The First was terribly small compared to the land dragon, but he faced it right from the front.

"Err……I read in the book that normally you have to circle around and defeat it from behind though?"

The First was looking at his past self while touching his chin with his hand. He was criticizing his past self, like [There is no technique there] or [Aim at its joint more].

[Haa? Is that so? But look there……it's dragon you know? If you are a man then you'll want to fight it right from the front!]

The First laughed 'gahagaha'. Looking at his made me felt headache.

The past Basil fighting the land dragon in the tranquil village was also laughing. Before long, bluish white light overflowed from his body. He must be using the Art Limit Burst that he taught me.

He swung around his great sword and overwhelmed the land dragon.

However, even though the land dragon's skin was shaved, the attack didn't reach until its flesh. It felt like it would be over quickly if the First went around and attacked from behind but…….

Even so he fought it from the front. When the land dragon hit the ground with its head like a hammer, Basil jumped behind.

The land dragon's eyes glared at Basil. The ground was gouged, indicating the fierceness of the two side's battle.

Basil pointed the great sword's tip at the land dragon. He was breathing and sweating heavily. But, Basil was still laughing.

[Bring it on, you lizard bastard! I'll show you my trump card, AAAAAA!!]

It bothered me a bit but, could it be at that time Basil—the First didn't realize that his opponent was a dragon? N, no, as expected there is no way that's true……perhaps.

The pattern surfacing on Basil's body blew off, and bluish white light enveloped his body like a flame.

"Is that, the third stage? But, is it really that different from before?"

The Art that was recorded in blue Jewel was called support type. It wasn't really related with direct attack, but support type was a gathering of convenient Arts.

But, the First declared to me.

[It doesn't matter what kind of Art it is, if you master it—if you reach the third stage it will become usable Art. Well, there is a bit of problem with using this one though……]

The First didn't talk what that problem was, but the Basil inside the memory moved.

He shouldered his great sword and leaped up, then the impact of his jump gouged the ground. Right after that, the left front leg of the land dragon was cut off and rotated in the air.

The First looked up to the sky. I followed his gaze a beat later and there was Basil's figure there.

[I'll stuff your head as decoration in my mansion!]

He raised his great sword overhead and then added with the speed of his falling, Basil swung down the great sword on the land dragon. When the great sword pierced the ground, the ground was gouged even larger than when the land dragon's head struck the ground.

When the bluish white light that wrapped around his body like flame settled down, Basil shouldered his great sword. The land dragon's head fell on the ground and the blood overflowing from the neck showered Basil.

Basil's left hand wiped his face and then he leaped on the head that fell on the ground.

When he lifted his great sword, the surrounding villagers and savage tribe cheered loudly.

[I displayed my strength. That's why the guys around me followed me. Well, simple right?]

"Ha, haa, I see. Or rather, that……could it be what the First wanted to tell me today is, become a "dragon slayer", is it?"

I'll be troubled if I'm told to defeat a dragon just like this. The current me wasn't so strong I could fight a dragon right from the front.

However, the First was exasperated.

[Idiot, that ain't it. Well, if you are a man it won't be any loss if you become able to at least defeat a dragon though.]

The man of the First's standard apparently had to be a mighty warrior as the essential condition. A young boy rushed out from among the villagers who were cheering.

From the boy's face he must be the Second—Crassel.

[Dad is amazing! I also want to become like dad!]

Basil became slightly embarrassed seeing Crassel running around in high spirits.

[I, I see.]

At that point the scenery was dyed grey once more and the time stopped.

And then, the First said. He folded his arms and looked up to the sky.

[I think it was at this time. Rather than thinking that I want to eat until I'm full……my thinking changed to I want to make him eat, until his stomach is full. Before that, I was only frantically rampaging around with my broken heart……really I wonder why. It was at this time.]

The First continued speaking.

[Lyle, you were able to eat until you felt full right?]

"Eh? Ah, yes. I was able to eat until I was full but……"

Surely that was something to be happy about. I didn't even realize that until now but, I was blessed.

[I see, then that's fine. Then……that's fine. That's why, you too work hard so the people around you can eat until they're full.]

He must meant Aria-san and others by that.

I understood what the First wanted to tell me, but I said my honest feeling.

"Honestly, I still haven't sort out my feeling whether to accept her. When I'm still thinking that it's difficult even with just Novem alone,

adding one more person on top of that is……besides, right now there is also Sophia-san too."

The First laughed.

[Ain't that right! That was shocking. You, even though you are my descendant, women are flocking to you, just what's with that huh?]

The First laughed, but his tone became a bit serious.

[Can I rely on you, to take care of Aria-chan?]

"She said that she want to become adventurer, so I will accompany her along with Sophia-san until they become able to stand on their own. But, I'm wondering whether it's alright to drag them into my objective."

When I said that I would become adventurer, and then the events that made me reached that decision……if it was seen from the outside, surely it wasn't something praiseworthy.

It was simply, because it was a quick way to earn money, that's all.

However, the First clapped my shoulder.

[Idiot! That's alright! Someone like me volunteered into a reclamation group just because I wanted my first love to look at me, because I wanted to eat until I'm full. But, if you're a man then after this you've to decide what you will do from there.]

"What will I do, from here?"

What could I do, I who lost against my little sister Celes and got driven out from house. Besides, just what is it that I want to do?

The First clapped my shoulders hard repeatedly.

[That’s right! Search what is it that you want to do. Also……and also. Make Aria-chan happy for me. I cannot do it after all.]

In order for the current ancestors who were only recording right now to get involved with the outside world, my help was necessary no matter what. They couldn’t do anything by themselves.

"……I’ll do the best that I can."

The First didn’t look convinced but, he smiled.

[I see. But, that’s fine for now I guess.]

Chapter 20 – Request.

—That day.

The feudal lord of Dalien, Ventra Rodornia was cutting open the seal of a letter that he didn't really want to read inside his mansion's office.

Night had come and he was able to make time, so he finally was going to check it. He was reluctant because the sender of the letter wasn't someone that was really likable for Ventra.

No, the likeable here wasn't in the personal capacity, but in his capacity as feudal lord. The sender was a young man in his early twenty, Dale Bagan.

Bagan House was a dependent on Ventra who was a baron. It was a house with knight rank, and its head was a feudal lord who governed over a small village. (TN: In Japan at sengoku period there is this system of yorioya and yoriko. It's a system where a powerful retainer house (yorioya) will act like a parent to several other smaller retainer houses (yoriko). The yorioya will have to take care of their yoriko if they faced some kind of trouble, in return the yoriko will have to mobilize their force if their yorioya need it and act under his command. This system seems to be adopted sometimes in the WN that has nobility in the story. I'm going to use the word dependent to describe yoriko and caregiver for yorioya here. Or does anyone know any better words for this?)

But, since the head of the house changed, there wasn't any contact from that house. From Ventra's point of view, it was nothing more than a house that he kept associating with because of a certain reason.

Bagan House’s previous house head and his eldest son mobilized their troop because of Rodornia House’s demand and then both of them died in battle. Dale then succeeded the house.

After that Bagan House openly showed their dislike of any intervention from outside. Certainly the responsibility for the war that caused Dale’s father and big brother to die also lied in Ventra. It was a war between fellow feudal lords in Bahnseim Kingdom that caused big damage to both sides.

Both sides asked his majesty the king at Centralle to act as mediator. Thanks to that the expenses wasn’t little.

It had been three years since Bagan House continued to refuse associating with him.

But then they suddenly sent him this letter.

Ventra felt a bad premonition.

After he checked the content of the letter, a scowl formed on Ventra’s eyebrows. Seeing the expression of the kind and plump feudal lord clouded, the nearby vassal opened his mouth.

"My lord, is something the matter?"

Ventra put the letter on the table and joined his hands before relaxing his expression.

"Good grief, they didn’t send any contact at all until now, and yet when it suddenly come it’s this……"

In Bahnseim Kingdom, a dependent meant the small feudal lords who followed their caregiver, which referred to the powerful feudal lord in their area. They were feudal lords of the same rank and equally served Bahnseim Kingdom, but as expected there was

pecking order that existed due to the scale of their respective territory.

Only house with the rank of baron and above could become caregiver, and it was also the caregiver's role to consolidate their dependents. And so, Ventra also couldn't ignore the letter that came from Dale.

Ventra sighed.

"……Looks like they caused a dispute with their neighboring territory. It seems their opponent is just a vassal of a vassal knight house, but they are still outclassed. This letter is requesting me to lend them soldier."

"That's……"

The vassal made a complicated expression.

Bagan House's territory was bordered with a territory that was governed by a feudal lord of another region.

In Bahnseim, a vassal knight referred to a knight that served not the king but served a feudal lord. Speaking of their status, Bagan House was higher, but the scale of the opponent's territory was bigger, because of that they were outmatched.

They caused a dispute with such opponent.

Normal noble considered vassal knight to have lower status than them. But, among the vassal knights there were also a lot of them who were more powerful than even noble.

Accidentally, Maini House that was bordered with Bagan House's territory was a case like that.

Furthermore, this wasn’t a dispute between Ventra’s fellow dependents, but a dispute with the vassal knight of other feudal lord.

A dispute was troublesome. That was the honest opinion of Ventra.

"If I carelessly send soldier there, it will provoke the other side. But, if we ignore this and they start killing each other, as caregiver I’ll have to come out. Good grief, they are bringing this kind of troublesome problem to me."

He didn’t have any interaction with Bagan House normally and their relationship only amounted to being acquaintance.

He didn’t have any feeling toward Dale personally. But, he also had interaction with the previous head and his eldest son. On top of that, if the rumor that Ventra e abandoned his dependent spread, he would be troubled.

Because the other dependents that were following Ventra would hold distrust toward him then.

Ventra touched his flabby jaw and pondered for a while.

But, an idea seemed to flashed in his mind and he picked the letter to check it.

"Hmm, perhaps it will work out somehow after all."

His vassal looked at Ventra with a puzzled look.

"My lord, did you have some kind of ingenious idea? I cannot even think of anything."

Ventra took out a paper and his hand held a pen.

"It’s troublesome too for both sides’ parents to show up at a fight between children. The other side should understand that too. In that case, I’ll take some measures first."

Ventra started to write a letter for the feudal lord who was the lord of the vassal knight involved in the dispute. He was writing about the person he would dispatch there in the letter.

The vassal read that name and tilted his head.

"My lord, is this really alright?"

"Yes, the other side will guess our intention with this. It’s fine, I understand the disposition of the other side’s feudal lord, he will guess our intention well enough with this."

Ventra had met the neighboring feudal lord face to face several times in place like party and the like. And then, if the other side read the name of the person he would dispatch, Ventra was convinced that he would guess his intention.

Ventra ordered his vassal.

"Call Zelphy. Also, send the request to the guild too the first thing in the morning."

.

The cart of the wagon was shaking.

A cloth was laid out as roof, so there was no need to be bothered by the sunlight.

We who are traveling slowly through the highway with tranquil scenery stretching on continued to question the back of Zelphy-san who was driving the wagon.

"Zelphy-san, this request is completely unexpected isn’t it?"

Zelphy-san’s shoulders twitched at my question.

"N, no, look……as expected even this kind of request, it’s better to accept it don’t you think so?"

Aria-san looked slightly happy.

"That’s right! As expected, receiving this kind of request really feel like adventurer! It really give that kind of feeling!"

Apparently she was happy that we finally went out to do a job that was exactly like in her imagination.

From inside the Jewel I could hear the completely opposite reaction of the First and the Second.

[Aria-chan in high spirits is really adorable.]

[I wish she will feel more tension. This is a problem between territories they are going to. If they are careless someone might end up dead.]

Yes, for some reason when we gathered in the guild, Zelphy-san who was fully prepared told us that there was a request and we would head to the location.

The content of the request she accepted was a dispatch as reinforcement to a place that was in a complicated trouble between territories.

I want to say that they should send Dalien’s soldier normally. The reaction of the Fifth until the Seventh was also really cold.

[A dependent caused problem with other territory, and then other have to take care of that problem for them. Good grief, what a troublesome matter.]

[Exactly. I wish they would do something about it by themselves before running in tears to other.]

[If they are running and crying to their caregiver, the other side will also run in tears to their own caregiver……. Just what do they want to do by making the problem bigger.]

The three of them reacted negatively to the request of the feudal lord who was a dependent.

On the other hand, the opinion of First until the Third was,

[Stupid idiot! It's caregiver's job to lend a hand if there is problem! Even the dependent has worked hard in various things for their caregiver!]

[That's right! Caregiver that cannot be relied on shouldn't be caregiver!]

[Well, they should help each other when this kind of thing happen.]

As always these seven people's opinion wasn't the same, but this time the Fourth was placed in a complicated position.

[……I can understand the feeling of both sides so I cannot say anything here.]

Inside the wagon Novem was checking the supply. The wagon was filled not with just food. There were also various tools loaded in it.

But, even though we are going to a place where there was trouble with other territory, there was no weapon transported. Speaking of any weapon that was brought in this trip, there was only our own weapon.

"There isn't anything like weapon here, so what are we going there for?"

Sophia-san was making a complicated expression.

"……I am acquainted with the head of Maini House that is in the other side of the dispute. In the past there was also times when he gave me some gift for my birthday or the like, so I don't want to participate in this request. Or rather, I cannot believe at all that person will cause problem with other feudal lord……"

Zelphy-san yelled at Sophia-san with thundering voice.

"That's obviously not allowed! You're this party member. All of you share your lot with one another. Besides, there is no way I can do something about this with me alone……"

It seemed the mumbled words at the later half were her true feeling. Apparently Zelphy-san's employer was involved with this request.

Novem looked up at the ceiling inside the wagon.

"It seems there is meaning in Lyle-sama, not Zelphy-san going there. I can guess the situation in general but……. Lyle-sama, I feel that we will be able to accumulate a precious experience here."

Then the Third who was listening to the talk spoke out. There was no doubt that he was thinking something wicked.

[Hou, in that case the neighboring territory that is the opponent is the territory that was involved with the bandit subjugation last time then. No, it's the caregiver that was involved in guess. I see, that's the reason why an instructor like Zelphy, or rather Lyle is dispatched like this.]

The Sixth spoke with a delighted voice. This people are a bit scary.

[Nice. You will be able to ask extra reward using this as the reason.]

The Fourth leaped at the money topic.

[Extra! That has a nice ring to it. I see, by dispatching Lyle who had been a help for the other side too, it showed to the other side that this side has no intention to fight. The intention is to bring this matter to be resolved by the involved party only.]

I see, apparently the feudal lord of the other side was in my debt.

The bandit group that was rampaging at the neighboring territory was hiding in Dalien so that they couldn't be touched. I was the one who restrained that bandit group before handing it over to them, so various complicated matters were resolved.

……Eh? What if the other side didn't guess this side's intention? Won't this be meaningless then?

While I was feeling troubled, Aria-san talked to me worriedly.

"A, are you alright, Lyle?"

"Yes, I'm fine. I'm fine but……what did Ventra-san say about this?"

Zelphy-san kept her mouth shut, but after a while she sighed and explained the situation.

"The problem happened several weeks ago. The retainers of a vassal knight put on their full equipment and patrolled the inside of their territory in order to defeat monster. But, one of the retainers went missing. In the end he wasn't found so his comrades went back. But, that retainer crossed over to other territory and died inside a forest with his equipment stolen."

If there was death, then it didn't feel like it would end peacefully no matter what.

The Third whistled and then his tone turned serious.

[This is bad. The neighbor absolutely won’t draw back like this. Because, one of his retainer died. If he draw back it won’t set good example to his other retainers. What’s more the death happened at other territory……uwaa, I don’t want to get involved.]

Zelphy-san continued.

"And, from here on it’s important……that Maini House is suspecting Bagan House. Well, obviously he would be suspicious if his retainer died in the opponent’s territory. Besides, it looks like the retainer who died was really trusted."

The Second spoke to me with a serious voice.

[What happened with the corpse after it was found? Lyle, confirm it.]

"Err, who was it that discovered the corpse? Well, it must be someone related with Bagan House though."

In respond to my words Zelphy-san was,

"That’s it. it was a villager of Bagan House who discovered the corpse. But then, for unknown reason Maini House sniffed out that discovery quickly. It’s curious how did they know, and Bagan House too is thinking that perhaps this is a scheme of Maini House."

The Seventh spoke in exasperation.

[Haa, troublesome. Well, if Lyle is there then other side will also act considerately to a certain degree, and there is also no need to worry that the big boss of the other side will come out. If the boss actually came out then let’s give him a warning. Though it’s unthinkable that Ventra haven’t done anything.]

Ventra-san had the appearance of a kindly uncle. He was also highly evaluated as a feudal lord, but after actually talking with him I knew that he was a strict person.

I want to believe that he had already arranged various things beforehand.

Zelphy-san's shoulders dropped. She shouldn't want to accept this kind of troublesome request. What's more, it was only us five who participated.

The one with motivation was Aria-san and……Novem perhaps? Zelphy-san looked really reluctant.

"Even I don't want to accept any troublesome request. Something like trouble related with territory often has deeply-rooted factor in it so it's really difficult. Aa, I don't wanna……I don't want to go."

Then the Second agreed with Zelphy-san's opinion.

[I get it. I totally get it. Dispute with neighboring territory will absolutely happen. For example like villager crossing to other territory and plucked the grass there. That kind of problem happened really a lot……and gradually both sides will be antagonistic to each other. Anyway it's troublesome.]

I think it's amazing that Walt House was able to get along well with Forxus House who was our neighbor at the beginning if that was the case.

But, the First spoke with a puzzled voice.

[There will be dispute? I never heard anything like that in my era.]

For an instant I wondered if perhaps no one reported to the First when trouble happened or something. But, there should be someone reporting to the First seeing that he was the feudal lord.

Then the Third laughed.

[No, no one in their right mind would stir up trouble with the First who one-handedly defeated the savage tribe and dragon with. Our neighbors at that time were absolutely shaking in their boots. In fact our caregiver was also scared.]

The Second too, he spoke as though he had just noticed it.

[Eh, is that so? I thought that the neighbors were cold at my time though……]

The Third was exasperated.

[Right, about that, the Second was also in the bad. You made light of associating with the neighbors. Do you know how much hardship I went through to get along with my caregiver because of that?]

I felt surprised thinking that the Third also went through hardships. The image in my mind was that the Third with his wickedness would overcome such problem with his cunning so it was shocking hearing this.

With confidence the First was—.

[Well, I have two hands though.]

It was a remark toward the Third's word of one-handedly, but the Second spoke coldly.

[Stop it. It's embarrassing and cannot be laughed at even if you said that while actually understanding the meaning of the word. If you said that without any understanding, then it's really embarrassing and cannot be laughed at. No matter which way both are embarrassing so stop it.]

The First sulked at the Second's fault finding.

I sighed on the cart and looked down.

"What should we do there?"

Zelphy-san was also perplexed. But, it seemed Ventra-san only told her to head to the location.

"Don’t ask me! I was only told to go there!"

It might be Ventra-san saying to not get deeply involved in his own way.

But, as expected I felt that the case this time was a heavy burden for me.

.

We arrived in the territory of Bagan House after several days.

However, it seemed we weren’t welcomed.

Zelphy-san talked to the representatives, but the gathered lineup was all young people. There was one girl in her teen and two young men in their twenty.

Those three welcomed us but the other villagers were only watching us from inside their house.

When I muttered "We aren’t welcomed huh" with small voice, Novem nodded.

"I think it can’t be helped. It’s scary for them to know that there is an armed group staying near them."

The Seventh’s voice came from inside the Jewel.

[Especially when speaking of adventurers or the like, they are ruffians. Lyle, this is how the fief’s populace will react. Remember it.]

The Third made fun of the Seventh.

[That opinion is absolutely influenced by your personal thinking isn't it? They will react the same even to non-adventurer. After all it's terrifying to see soldiers coming. Well, even if it can't be helped that they aren't welcoming, this is……I cannot decide which of these three is the representative. I think it's the kid with the blue hair though.]

It just as the Third said.

At the center was a tall young man with deep blue hair. Beside him stood a young man with tall height too and black short hair.

At the opposite side was a freckled girl with brown hair that was braided at the back of her head, standing with a worried look on her face.

What troubled Zelphy-san was her inability to guess the status of these three from their appearance.

"Aa~, we are adventurer party who came here due to the request from Dalien's feudal lord. Am I right to believe, that you're the feudal lord of this village?"

The young man with deep blue hair that grew until his shoulder had a slim but trained body. He looked like an agreeable youth just like Rondo-san.

But, his clothing wasn't any different with the villager young man standing beside him. There was also no sword hanging on his waist, it was impossible to conclude that he was a feudal lord from his appearance.

"Yes. I am Dale Bagan. The feudal lord of this land. Can't you see that?"

Was the sarcasm at the end necessary?

The Second was a bit doubtful.

[Strange. He should at least dress his part at this kind of time but……his appearance, looks like he had only just finished doing farming work.]

Looking at his clothes there was also some spot that was dirty from mud. Perhaps he was really just coming from doing farming work.

Aria-san’s expression turned cloudy.

"That way of speaking is……"

Sophia-san also had the same opinion.

"There is the suitable appearance for meeting with other. We are being looked down on."

The First objected at that opinion. Sophia-san couldn’t hear anyway, so I wish he would lower his voice. After all the consumption of my mana increased like this.

[Human isn’t based on his appearance! Look at the inside, the inside!]

The Fifth murmured.

[The First who has appearance like barbarian is also barbarian both at the outside and the inside though.]

The Third laughed.

[Well, appearance is important after all.]

Zelphy-san handed the enveloped that was filled with the letter from Ventra-san.

"This is a letter from the baron. The five of us will participate in the protection of this village. Do we have your permission?"

The gaze of the black haired young man turned sharp and he glared at us.

"This group of kids is the soldiers the baron sent us? Oi, are you guys looking down at us huh!"

Then the girl stopped him.

"Zappa, stop! My apologies. I am Paola Carus. I am an acting higher-up who act as the peacemaker of this village."

When the girl introduced herself, Zelphy-san tolerated the man—Zappa-san's rudeness.

"I understand your feeling. But, it's not pleasant to hear it said right to our face. Well, both sides should pay attention to such thing."

She looked like she really didn't want to deal with Zappa-san. Dale-san who finished reading the letter looked at our way.

"It's written here that the baron cannot send soldiers, so he dispatched all of you in exchange. It's unfortunate. Looks like from the baron's point of view, this kind of small village doesn't matter."

Zelphy-san scratched her hair.

"I understand what you want to say. But it's not like the lord is forsaking this place. Even the cost of dispatching the five of us here cannot be sneezed at you know?"

Dale-san opened his mouth with a slight dejection.

"Three years ago this village also sent manpower to participate in a war. My father and big brother, and also Paola's father died in that war. To receive this treatment even after that much loss……I cannot accept it."

If that was true, certainly Ventra-san's response felt problematic.

The Fifth spoke with an exasperated tone.

[He should have received various things like solace money for example. Besides, they participated by their own will right? Dependent is really troublesome huh. Or rather, isn't the choice of personnel they sent to war strange?]

The Sixth also had the same opinion.

[Do they really want soldiers to be sent here and turn this into war? I wish they will have wider outlook.]

The Seventh was enraged.

[What's with this attitude after Lyle expressly showed up here!]

The First until the Third were sympathetic to Dale-san's feeling.

[This isn't a problem that money can solve! His family died you know!]

[Right. Do you know how difficult it is for this kind of small village if that much loss happened to them……]

[This is why noble with the rank of baron and above is no good. That's cold. It's too cold as a human!]

The Fourth who was able to understand both sides' opinion stayed silent. The six people were quarreling.

Zelphy-san put her hand on her waist.

"My condolence of your loss. But, we too are coming here because of a request. We are adventurer after all, so allow us to accomplish the request properly. Besides, Lyle here has experience subjugating a bandit group before. He has experience in real battle, and even I have quite a lot of experience myself. We won't do anything to make thing worse, feudal lord-sama!"

Then Dale-san unexpectedly apologized honestly.

"My apologies. I was a bit worked out just now. We have prepared a hut for the five of you to use, so please rest there today. Let’s meet tomorrow to talk about our plan from now."

Then Paola-san pressed on Dale-san.

"Tha, that’s no good, Dale! No, Dale-sama! We have to explain the situation right away."

"They had just arrived and must be tired. Let’s allow them to rest."

The Second’s voice came from inside the Jewel.

[Lyle, contact this young lady later. I want to hear the story from her.]

The Second was motivated. But, the Fifth and others didn’t seem interested. They were the same Walt House, but their opinion clearly differed due to their position.

Even while thinking that this disunity inside the Jewel was just like normal, I decided to talk with Paola-san later.

.

—At the mansion of Bagan House.

Zappa visited Dale when night came. Although it was called a mansion, it was only somewhat more splendid than the other house. It was unimaginable that it was the feudal lord’s house. Although, the feudal lord only governed a small village. Even if he had a large mansion he would be unable to maintain it.

Dale was sitting facing Zappa in the living room of the mansion.

"Zappa, don’t anger the adventurers too much. They are carrying weapon."

"Dale, how can you act like that as the feudal lord! Besides, if it’s weapon then that Pini is going to get some. We will also have weapon in a short while. That bastard baron too only sent those unmotivated brats……he isn’t thinking anything at all about us. Just how much hardship we went through at that time……"

Zappa who was saying extreme thing was like a big brother to Dale.

Dale who was a second son who wouldn’t succeed the house was doing farming work since he was little. At that time he became acquainted with the kids of the village and got along well with Zappa, Paola—and then the small, plump, and a bit unreliable Pini, who were the young generation the same age with him.

In the war three years ago, his father, big brother, and then Paola’s father who was a higher-up of the village died. Zappa and Pini also participated in that war.

"Zappa, I understand your feeling but calm down. For now, we have five more people at our side."

He didn’t know whether they would be useful in battle, even so they were adventurer. They were also properly equipped. Dale considered it better to have them rather than not.

"Actually I wanted to solve this problem by both sides talking."

Zappa strongly argued at Dale’s weak-kneed statement.

"Stupid idiot! You the feudal lord cannot be indecisive like that! Listen to me, Dale, the enemy is vassal knight, his status is lower than you."

"Zappa, the opponent’s village has five hundred people. Thinking simply their number is five times of us. It’s reckless to fight."

Speaking of status then Dale was higher, but the strength and scale of the other side was obviously higher. Zappa persuaded Dale.

"Listen, you are being underestimated as the new lord. You saw the baron’s attitude right? Even though normally he should send us soldiers, he only sent that kind of brats here. The neighboring territory is also the same. Because you are young they are making complain and deceiving us!"

Dale made a troubled expression.

In reality, the baron’s attitude and the case this time that became a problem—it was a fact that a retainer of other territory died in their territory’s forest. Originally the other party should be the side that was doubted. And yet the opponent was plainly saying that this side was in the wrong.

The one who died trespassed into this territory and got killed. And yet Maini House was doubting them. And then when they asked for help, their caregiver Ventra didn’t give a decent respond.

Dale couldn’t say anything back because he also felt the same in some part.

"Zappa, when the corpse was found, it was really in our territory right?"

Then Zappa yelled angrily with a loud voice.

"Obviously! Are you doubting me huh!?"

"N, no……that’s not it."

It was Zappa and Pini who found the corpse when they entered the forest. When the two were asked why they entered the forest, they answered that they were going to defeat monster and obtain magic stone.

If the magic stone was sold when a peddler came, the price would be beaten down but they wouldn’t have to bother with bringing it to the guild themselves and it would become some amount of money.

"Hey, Dale. I’m putting my hope on you yeah. In the case this time, we’re gonna pay back the baron and also the other side. It’s the other side who is wrong."

"……But, there is no way. Besides, if the other side get serious it will be over for us."

Zappa stood up from his chair and put his arm around Dale’s shoulders.

"Idiot. Believe me. It’s just the guys from other territory, I’ll beat them up easily. You just think of making this village bigger. Your father and big brother just wasted money pointlessly and didn’t save a single coin. They said it was for associating with the surrounding feudal lords when they only wasted our tax. That’s why this village couldn’t become big."

Dale was agreeing with Zappa’s point. Dale who was a second son and mainly worked in the farm from the beginning had a thinking process that was closer to the common populace.

Dale also knew about how his father and big brother were pointlessly using the tax money since when they were alive.

"Got it. After this case is resolved, let’s go all out enlarging the fields. I’ll also ask Paola about the matter that Zappa mentioned."

Dale was a bit dejected when he mentioned Paola’s name. For Dale too Paola who was around the same age with him was a girl he was close to.

There was also other young girls, but Paola could be said as his first love.

"So you will do it for me! Thanks a lot, Dale! That Paola, even when I called her out she wouldn’t give me any good answer. But, with this I’ll be able to marry into her house. If that happen, I’ll officially become a higher-up and support you."

Dale pressed his left hand on his face.

"Yeah, that’s right, Zappa……"

Dale who was promoting the marriage of his first love with someone who was like his big brother had a complicated feeling—.

Chapter 21 – Bagan House and Maini House

Within the same day of our arrival, I invited Paola-san to listen to her story.

When I called out to her, she came to the hut where we were staying by her own initiative.

There we listened to the circumstance but…….

"Err, that person called Zappa, and another person called Pini discovered a corpse inside the forest. The corpse had been stripped from its equipment, so that person was killed from a crime of robbery then?"

Paola-san nodded.

"Yes. But, we didn't know the identity of the corpse. But, an envoy from the territory next to us immediately came……"

From what I heard, the other territory felt suspicious. How were they able to send an envoy right away after the corpse was discovered?

In addition,

"After that, the lord of the village next to us suspected us that we might be the culprit who killed the victim. They claimed that the person who died wasn't someone who would do something like crossing territory without reason. Besides, they are suspecting us right from the start and won't listen to us. Actually we wanted to request for mediation, but in that case it will be necessary for us to pay the expenses to our caregiver……"

It was also shocking that the other village was suspecting this side.

They would suspect right away without even investigating?

Aria-san stood up hearing that.

"Tha, that’s strange! Even their timing was too good, and most of all they are suspecting only based on a reason that the person who died wouldn’t do something like that……this, the other side is absolutely scheming something!"

But, the one who objected to Aria-san was also my fellow party member Sophia-san.

"I cannot ignore what you’re saying. The head of Maini House is a splendid person. He also has no reason to scheme like that. Could it be, the truth is that someone of this village is related to the death?"

Paola-san stared down quietly.

Like that Aria-san and Sophia-san glared at each other. While that was happening the First and the Second were also glaring at each other inside the Jewel.

[You said that Aria-chan is stupid? You, looks like you really want to make me angry huh.]

[She is wrong because she implicitly believe that story just from listening to one side’s story. This type of person will cause various problems. She is the epitome of a person stirring up a situation with her nosiness.]

The First who was in Aria-san’s supportive camp and the Second who was habitually opposing the First. Because of his hatred to the First, the way the Second looked at Aria-san also became stricter.

Novem consoled Paola-san. And then, she asked her to continue.

"Is there anything else that you notice?"

Paola-san continued with a subdued tone.

"Honestly, the atmosphere of this village isn't good. My father who acted as the peacemaker died in war, the lord also changed……at first everyone was happy. It's disrespectful but, everyone thought that if Dale-sama becomes the lord, then their opinion will be listened to. But……recently it feels like there is something that is worse than before. This time too……there are voices, saying that Dale cannot be relied on."

The Third yawned.

[That's too abstract. Are they perhaps thinking that everything bad is the feudal lord's responsibility? Well, their disappointment is big exactly because they also placed big expectation.]

These people, even though they themselves were also feudal lord…….

When I touched the Jewel, the Third spoke with a reluctant tone.

[What? You want to solve this? You're going to poke your nose into this kind of problem of unrelated stranger? It's bothersome so you better not. Besides, this is between long time neighbors, they must have various things piled up high between them. It's troublesome.]

When I thought that these guys are useless, the Third spoke in exasperation.

[Besides you know, Lyle……there is no guarantee at all that these kids are saying the truth.]

.

The next day.

We came to the lord's mansion in order to plan.

It was called mansion but……yeah, I understand that I mustn’t compare it to Walt House’s residence.

But, the problem wasn’t the mansion. The content of the planning was too terrible.

Zelphy-san was talking with Dale-san and Zappa-san who claimed that he was the representative of the village’s vigilante corps, but her face was gradually getting stiff.

"In other words, what……you thought of calling the baron but, you didn’t think of anything about the matter after that?"

Dale-san made his excuse.

"No, I thought that if we have soldiers come here, the other side too won’t dare to coerce us, besides perhaps they would listen to what we have to say then."

Certainly the protection of the village would become easier if soldiers came as reinforcement. The other side also wouldn’t come attacking recklessly……it seemed he had such thinking.

However, the First was irritated.

[Don’t screw around! Listen, you’ve gotta protect your own territory with your own strength! Show some damn spirit!]

The Second was also speaking agitatedly.

[Idiot! There is no way a village this small can have a go with the neighboring territory! Even if they gather some men they will only have around ten until twenty! What are you telling them to do with that. They’re correct to ask help!]

The Third was laughing loudly.

[Why are you two talking with the assumption there will be fight? That’s too hot-blooded. Or rather……if this side called soldier to come here then the other side also won’t be able to stay quiet, won’t that be bad?]

Zelphy-san made a troubled face. But, she then looked at me and shrugged.

"How do you plan to let the other side know that this side has more manpower coming? Besides, do you have a way to contact the other side?"

It seemed Dale-san hadn’t thought that far.

"No, I thought they will understand the next time they come—"

"Haahn? What are you planning to do if a skirmish broke out then huh!?"

Zappa-san was looking at us. He was folding his arms and acting haughtily. I heard that he was the leader of the vigilante corps here but, honestly speaking he didn’t look that strong.

"It’s the job of you guys to fight right?"

Zelphy-san scratched her hair.

"We will contact the other side. It will be bothersome if they thought we are preparing to fight after all. Is that fine with you my lord?"

Dale-san observed Zappa-san’s mood. When Zappa-san nodded, Dale-san also nodded.

Seeing such exchange, a sound of clicking tongue came from the Jewel. I don’t know who was it, but the Fifth spoke representing everyone’s opinion.

[……What an unreliable feudal lord.]

Zelphy-san talked to me.

"Lyle, we are going to the other territory so come with me. Also, we are bringing Sophia missy with us. If she is acquainted with the people there then we also won’t get attacked right away without question."

Certainly that’s true.

If Sophia-san is with us, we might be able to make a chance to talk at least.

We left Novem and Aria-san behind and headed to the neighboring territory.

.

—Aria was staying behind in the village together with Novem.

The two headed to an open space a slight distance away from the village. There Novem started to instruct Aria in magic. Nearby there was the wagon and the horse that was tied to a tree while eating grass. A tranquil scenery spread out.

Aria readied her hand and then she pointed at a target that was placed above a tree stump and fired her magic.

"Stone Bullet!"

A rock flying out from the ground flew in an arc. It kept moving and passed the target before falling on the ground. It didn’t have any strength or even accuracy in it.

Aria’s shoulders dropped seeing that.

"As I thought it’s impossible……I’m not good with magic, and even bullet type magic end up like this."

Novem smiled. In fact Aria’s magic was terrible. She was able to handle only fire element well even in bullet type magic where it was only shooting out magic. But, those magic were still activated even while the person herself felt she wasn’t any good at it. It wasn’t the case that she didn’t have talent. After this the person only had to conquer her thinking that she wasn’t good at it.

"It’s alright Aria-san. The magic was activated so if you patiently practice you will be able to become skilled quickly. Fortunately, there is no problem with your lineage so the rest only depend on Aria-san yourself."

Novem mentioned that there was no problem with Aria’s lineage was because in order to handle magic, it was the lineage that was the most important compared to effort or talent.

The magicians in the past introduced themselves as noble.

The blood of magician, or noble in this case. Magic wouldn’t even activate without inheriting that.

"Well, although my house fell into ruin it was still a baron house. But, if I have to say then I’m better with spear though?"

Novem looked at the spear that was stabbed into the ground and made a troubled expression.

"But, if you are able to do this then your option will increase……. As I thought, you are adventurer, so it’s also important to increase what you can do."

Aria looked at Novem.

The silver staff was a tool called magic tool that had several Arts carved into it, it was a really expensive item. One person could only manifest one Art. There were stages in it which was the second and third stage, but fundamentally it was only one Art.

The attempt of reproducing that using tool resulted in magic tool.

Aria looked at the red Gem hanging on her neck.

"Novem is a magician so it’s fine but, no matter how you look at it I’m a vanguard."

Red Gem would record offensive Art that was called as vanguard type. Lyle’s blue Jewel was a support type. And then, the other one, the yellow Gem—it was called rear guard type, a Gem that memorized unique magic.

Gem and magic tool had bad compatibility. It was impossible to use both at the same time.

Novem explained to Aria.

"Certainly that might be the case. But, nothing bad will come from you being able to use magic, so let’s work hard to learn it. Look, it will be convenient to be able to lit fire or prepare water while travelling."

Aria looked at Novem with astonishment.

"Isn’t that just you wanting to make me do the chores?"

Novem laughed and denied it.

However, Novem was suddenly taken aback and turned her gaze to a nearby bush. Aria was puzzled.

"What’s wrong?"

"……No, it seems there was a mouse."

Novem said that and smiled at Aria. She then resumed the coaching—.

.

After crossing a river from the village of Bagan House, there was a village around there.

There was a forest between both houses, inside the forest there was a river flowing.

It would take a number of days to go around the forest. Because of that, I led at the front while using Arts to traverse through the forest. I checked the surrounding's map using the Fifth's Art, Map, and detected the surrounding enemy with the Sixth's Art, Search—.

We traveled with increased speed using the Fourth's Speed. We were able to pass through the forest quicker than expected.

Zelphy-san noticed that I had multiple Art and looked at me before speaking in astonishment.

"Good grief, you said that we will pass through the forest so I wondered whether you are an idiot but, certainly it's fast if it's like this. It will take more than a day if we circle around after all. ……But, as expected it's hard when you aren't used to it."

However, the three of us were covered in mud. Also, it was alright for me who used the Arts, but the other two could be seen acting bewildered when they had the Art suddenly used on them. They had practiced slightly before entering the forest but, even so they were still bewildered.

"No matter how it feel……it doesn't change the fact that it's fast."

The Fourth said.

[Even like this my Art can still be considered a better one though.]

We were walking in order to pass through the forest, but Sophia-san ended up looking the most terrible.

Her robe was caught in branch, and she tumbled down several times.

The battle axe on her back also got stuck by trees several times. Normally she was a serious and diligent person, and yet she only looked like a disappointing person inside the forest.

Perhaps she was aware of that herself. Her face was bright red.

"Sophia-san, are you alright?"

When I addressed her, Sophia-san tightened her expression with leaf and branch stuck on her hair. But, her face was still red.

"I'm fine. For a daughter of Rowley House, just this much is nothing at all!"

"I, is that so."

Even I was tired from walking inside an unfamiliar forest. Tree root jutted out from the ground, and depending on the place the ground would be muddy and slippery.

It was the Second who told me to advance through such place.

[I thought that you won't be used to it but, to think that you're this terrible. It's worrying. Lyle, go through the forest too on the way back. This is also a part of training.]

Thanks to the Second teaching me the way to walk, I ended up not losing face.

However, I didn’t expect it would be that hard to walk inside the forest. If a fight occurred in that kind of place, it might be dangerous.

After we came out of the forest, Zelphy-san pointed at a village that was visible from afar and said.

"So that’s the village governed by Maini House. Sophia, you are acquainted with them, so put your appearance in order. First let’s take off the leaves stuck on your hair."

Sophia-san touched her hair in panic.

Her panicked figure with red face was interesting with how different it was from her usual serious appearance.

While Zelphy-san was helping her, I murmured.

"Even so, the Arts of the ancestors are really convenient."

Although, it was hard to use them at my base state. I used the Art of the First, Full Over, the Art to raise my ability on the whole to be able to use the other Arts.

My mana wouldn’t hold, so I could only use the Arts intermittently. But, even then we were able to arrive at the destination faster than expected.

The Fourth explained proudly.

[Well, support type Art is good at this kind of thing. It doesn’t stand out, but I believe that its performance is extraordinary. Especially the Arts of the Fifth and the Sixth, you can call them unfair.]

The Fifth spoke shortly.

[Unfair? That’s fine. It’s a compliment.]

Unfair is compliment……I couldn’t understand the mind of the ancestors. But, certainly useful Arts that could grasp the surrounding geography and even detected the location of ally and enemy could be called as unfair.

With my inability to use them continuously I was unable to use the Arts recorded in the Jewel masterfully.

Furthermore, I was also unable to use the Art of the Third and the Seventh.

The First’s Art was strengthening type, an Art that increased the user’s ability.

The Second’s Art was an Art that made other people able to use Art. However, in order to do that the Art had side effect of making the user able to accurately grasp the position of other people relative to the user. It was an amazing Art.

I heard that the Third’s Art affected the mind, but I couldn’t handle it.

The Fourth’s Art increased the moving speed. It didn’t increase speed momentarily or explosively, it was a type that maintained the speed increase for a period of time.

The Fifth’s Art was the understanding of the surrounding terrain.

The Sixth was enemy searching.

I heard that the Seventh had space type Art.

It was a gathering of Arts with really abundant variety that could be relied on.

"Even though this thing will be the best if it’s not noisy like this."

The First complained after my muttering.

[Exactly, this guys' noisiness is really annoying.]

The Second scoffed.

[What is the most noisy guy is saying.]

I could hear the usual exchange inside the Jewel. Thanks to that my mana was decreasing. I don't think I can use Art anymore today.

I saw that the two had finished preparing and we started walking toward the village.

.

We used Sophia-san's name and we were guided to the mansion of Maini House.

The scale of the village was easily five times larger than the village of Bagan House. It was a village that was a gathering of multiple settlements and the mansion was also splendid.

Unlike Bagan House that was tardy in some aspect, Maini House was proper. No, it was a village that felt strict. When the villagers realized that we are the feudal lord's visitor, they gave us a path and lowered their head politely but—they seemed scared somehow. We were guided until the mansion as though that attitude was only obvious.

At the mansion, water was prepared for us who was in a dirty state. We cleaned off the dirt and then entered into the mansion where the head of Maini House, Medard Maini met us.

Everything with him was like the opposite compared to Dale-san. He had normal height. He had plump body, but his was wearing suits in a proper appearance. His grey hair was curled at the end and moustache also grew on his face. He was a man at his thirty.

Also, his eye expression was a bit bad. From a glance he looked like a villain that came out in story. I would be convinced if this person came out as a corrupt feudal lord character.

Sophia-san greeted that Maini-san with a smile.

"Medard-sama, long time no see."

Medard-san made a slightly sad expression. He must have known about Sophia-san’s circumstance.

"I’m relieved to see you alright, miss Sophia. However, as a fellow vassal knight I don’t know what to say about what happened to Rowley House……"

Sophia-san slightly looked down.

"No, it’s a fact that we weren’t able to protect the land granted to us. Besides, Rowley House also has uncle, it hasn’t ceased from being."

Sophia-san’s uncle was serving the caregiver of this region. That’s why, the house wasn’t extinct. But, it was only the main house—the head house of Rowley Family that was extinct.

The reason was because a bandit group rampage on this area and ransacked their village, then the head of the house along with his family were killed. Normally there should be a talk about Sophia-san taking husband to continue the house. However, with the fact of the house’s inability to protect their territory, the land granted to the house was confiscated.

It seemed Sophia-san too had walked a harsh life.

"Indeed. Also, about the business of your visit here today……"

Medard-san looked at me and made a difficult expression. And then, he straightened his back once more and his expression turned serious.

"A letter from my master, the feudal lord has come. It was telling me to be considerate to Lyle-dono. The names of several other nobles were also written there. Looks like they are really indebted to you."

The Third seemed to have fun.

[It might be the effect of we giving back the recovered loots to them for free. Haha~, it’s important to do good deed isn’t it?]

There was no persuasiveness in those words even if the Third said that.

After defeating the bandit group, I had the right for their property. Due to me returning them for free, Sophia-san came to me in order to pay back that debt. And then, it also become a factor that secured my safety this time.

The Seventh also sounded satisfied.

[that Ventra, looks like he was making necessary arrangements properly. Well, if he didn’t then……]

I was curious about the latter half but, I also thought that I didn’t want to hear it. Because of the ancestors position as feudal lord, they often said extreme statement a lot.

I looked at Medard-san while smiling awkwardly.

"No, what I did was only driving out the bandits."

However Medard-san seemed to have guessed the situation.

"Viscount-sama won’t do this much if that was all that you did. As a vassal, I have the duty to listen to viscount-sama’s command. Besides, it seems the baron at your side also doesn’t want to stir up trouble."

Apparently the caregiver of this region was a viscount.

I was thinking such thing while feeling admiration that everything moved just like the ancestors said.

I didn’t look perturbed, so Medard-san seemed to be amused.

"Have you heard about this already?"

"No, I only had conjecture before."

Zelphy-san looked relieved. Sophia-san seemed to be unable to follow the conversation. She was looking alternately at the face of me and Medard-san.

Medard-san explained to Sophia-san.

"Aa~, in other words, our side won’t make any move. It’s not amusing though."

Medard-san was in a position where his retainer was killed, but he was unable to do anything toward Bagan House that he thought as suspicious. Surely it wasn’t amusing for him. But, the caregivers of both sides showed the stance of not desiring any quarrel, and a backing which was me who they were indebted to also appeared. And so Medard-san couldn’t make any action.

The Third declared.

[Well, everything was already resolved by the time Lyle was dispatched to here. And they all live happily ever after! Like that.]

……I don’t think that anything has been resolved though?

Then, Sophia-san asked Medard-san.

"Pardon me, Medard-sama, just what is going on in the case this time? The other side said that they are being falsely accused one-sidedly though?"

Medard-san’s expression turned grim.

"One sided they said! Those guys, they are still saying that!"

Saying that Medard-san took out a letter from his pocket. The writing on it wasn’t pretty, but from looking it could be seen that it was written courteously.

The letter that was shown to us told that the corpse of a retainer of Maini House was at Bagan House.

Zelphy-san looked at the letter and then she turned her gaze to Medard-san.

"Just what does this……"

When we were preparing to search for my retainer who went missing, this letter arrived at the village. I don’t know who sent this but, I immediately sent an envoy. And then what did I find. My retainer’s corpse was really in Bagan House.]

Zelphy-san scratched her cheek.

"Ee~, the excuse of the other side is that this side immediately appeared right after they found the corpse."

Medard-san’s atmosphere changed.

"The retainer who died was a diligent guy. He was a hard worker, and he was also a brave warrior in battlefield. I saw his corpse, he got a terrible wound on his body. Certainly he might be killed by monster. But, will monster steal human’s weapon?"

Zelphy-san answered "I never heard about such thing". I interjected into the conversation.

"Say, don’t you think that the equipment might be taken off after that? And then perhaps the corpse was found later……"

Medard-san said.

"That forest isn’t suited for bandit to hide. The area around here is also the same. The baron is frequently dispatching soldiers to subjugate monster and bandit at the neighboring area. Perhaps those guys at Bagan House doesn’t think anything about it but, the baron is being considerate to them and send soldiers even until their area."

The Second’s evaluation for Bagan House was gradually lowering.

[What, so those guys are always receiving such favor? In that case then the story is slightly different though……]

Zelphy-san made a face that recalled something.

"Now that you said it, soldiers were dispatched until around this area wasn’t it?"

Medard-san nodded.

"The soldiers came to my place and explained the situation courteously. They didn’t stop by at that village was also so they didn’t become burden. The baron has gone that far, are you still saying that there might be bandit around here? Of course I cannot deny the possibility of bandit stopping by here in a good timing. But, those guys……the people of Bagan House cannot be trusted. It’s possible they discovered the corpse in this territory and then brought it to their own village. The retainer who died, it’s hard to believe that he would do something like crossing territory."

In other words, he wanted to say that it was hard to belive the retainer died in Bagan House's territory.

"But, intentionally carrying corpse like that……"

Is there any meaning in moving corpse like that? The Second explained the situation to me.

[Lyle, it's a complex matter when it come to crossing territory. Listen, for a feudal lord everything in his territory is his property. Even magic stone and material from monster are included in that. If the corpse of the retainer was discovered outside his own territory, it will be Maini House that got blamed. After all it will become a reason to question about the illegal trespassing and what could be he doing there.]

The First muttered in annoyance.

[That's annoyingly complicated. Just make them send representatives to duke it out. It will get resolved with that.]

I think absolutely nothing will be resolved like that.

Sophia-san asked Medard-san.

"By cannot be trusted you mean?"

Medard-san was irritated from remembering it.

"Although it's not to the degree of skirmish, there were many quarrel between Bagan House and Maini House since some generations ago. Dispute regarding the right to use the forest or the river's water. There won't be any end if you count it. But, that's alright. The problem is the previous generation."

Medard-san said that the previous head of Bagan House approached them to build friendly relationship between both

houses. He expanded his association with the surrounding feudal lords, and then he brought a proposal of setting a highway that crossed over the forest.

"The forest located between both houses also served as a kind of dividing wall. But, it’s easy for monster to settle there and cause great damage. If the forest is cleared up then the usable land will increase. That was why, the other side approached us with the proposal of cooperating with each other. But!"

It would be difficult with only the two houses to maintain the highway and cleared up the forest, so apparently the previous head requested Medard-san to raise fund.

With that, the effort to lay the groundwork with both houses’ caregiver and surrounding lords started but…….

"In the end, you can understand when you see that the forest is still in the same condition right? The plan doesn’t progress at the slightest. Those guys of Bagan House, their aim was only to make us supply them money. Thanks to that my position also worsened due to the failed talk with other houses."

The Fourth spoke in exasperation.

[That’s, the other side really have done it huh.]

Zelphy-san talked apologetically.

"That, the head of Bagan House has changed, so perhaps the next head didn’t really know about that circumstance……"

"That’s it! I know that! But, the youngster who succeeded the position doesn’t come to say anything. He also never give any greeting to his neighbors! Even more terrible than that is those guys of Bagan House……bringing the current head, his eldest son, and the higher-up to a war? Don’t screw around!"

Those were people who were irreplaceable for a village. Those leaders of the village were taken to participate in the war, and then the current head, his eldest son, and the higher-up too died in battle. Certainly, hearing that made me want to question just what in the world were they thinking.

There was an important plan. But the reason it met setback lied in Bagan House. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to state it as such.

It seemed the Third felt that the action of Bagan House was strange.

[It can't be helped even if it was said they intended to destroy themselves in a sense. Looking at how the higher-up's daughter is acting as proxy, it looks like they didn't even prepare their successor.]

The Sixth was also exasperated.

[That's just not done. I can agree even if the head of Maini House is thinking that they are making fun of him. It only looks like they are destroying themselves.]

Sophia-san was sympathizing with Medard-san.

"Medard-sama, now that you mentioned it when you were going around three years ago….."

"I was apologizing to the lords I was soliciting for cooperation from. I thought that youngster must have it hard because he had just taken over, so I took care of everything. And yet, that youngster……"

Apparently Dale-san refused to do such courtesy calls that included apologizing. It was surprising that he did such thing despite his serious appearance.

Sophia-san looked down while opening his mouth.

"As I thought, it was Bagan House that was in the wrong."

Zelphy-san was also making a troubled face.

"I understand your feeling but, I want you to not cause anything when we return back."

Medard-san was also of the same opinion.

"That will be better. Although, our side cannot withdraw that easily."

The Third was laughing. What was so funny?

[Ahahaha, how should I say it, that’s really tardy. Oops, Lyle is making a face that isn’t comprehending.]

Certainly I couldn’t understand. The problem this time and the circumstance surrounding it were difficult for me.

The Second sighed.

[No, that’s fine, Lyle. Something like this is complicated. For now, if I have to sum up only the gist of it……aa, show your face here today. Anyway, we’ll explain so that you understand.]

Wasn’t I just here as a backing? In front of this complicated problem, I decided to ask the ancestors what I should do after this.

.

Night.

We ended up sleeping in the mansion of Maini House.

I lied down in the guest room and sent my consciousness into the Jewel. The ancestors who were waiting for me there were planning to explain the case this time to me but…….

"Honestly, it’s puzzling."

The Second nodded.

[That’s how it is. Anyway, let’s sum up only the gist of it.]

Like that the explanation began—.

[Both houses are in discord with each other due to troubles that happened at their border.]

[A retainer of Maini House was murdered, his equipment was taken off and his corpse was discovered in Bagan House’s territory.]

[Incidentally a letter arrived at Maini House around this time. When they tried looking, they discovered their dead retainer.]

[Maini House suspected Bagan House.]

[Bagan House claimed they are innocent.]

[Tense situation continued at both sides.]

—I understand the flow of event. But, there are also many parts I don’t understand.

"The corpse was stripped off from its equipment isn’t a problem then."

The Third touched his front hair while explaining to me.

[There is problem personally I guess? But, what is important is in which territory he died. The dead retainer was a serious person who didn’t seem like he would trespass to other territory. That was what we were told, but it’s unknown what could that person be doing behind the scene. But, it’s suspicious how the letter can arrive at that amazing timing. Who could it be?]

The First was at his wits’ end.

[An envoy arrived right after the corpse was found so……before that a letter arrived, is that right? Who the hell sent the letter!?]

The Second pressed his forehead.

[We won't be this perplexed if we know. The letter was also only left behind at a conspicuous place in the village.]

I pondered.

The Third explained to me the parts that I didn't seem to understand.

[Lyle, everything in a territory belong to the feudal lord. The same apply to monster, naturally the feudal lord also has the right for the magic stone and material. If someone enter as they please, defeat monster, and take away the material, the feudal lord will get angry.]

"Say, I am working as an adventurer at Dalien, is that not a problem?"

[In regard to that Ventra-kun gave his permission through the guild, and there was also tax for magic stone right? That's the way at Dalien. But, that's only at Dalien and its surrounding. It will be different at other place so be careful.]

I was taken aback with realization.

"Then, if we defeated monster while traveling, we have obligation to report—"

The Second shook his head.

[Lyle……don't worry until that far. You have no choice but to fight if you are attacked, and if you defeat the monster you will sell it at your place of destination. There will be no end to it if you report every single thing. Or rather, it's troubling even if you report it. It's

fine if you stay quiet about it. But, it’s different story if you are trying to earn money there.]

At the case this time, that dead retainer of Maini House died outside the territory.

Normally Medard-san of Maini House would be in the position that had to apologize.

But, he was doubting the situation greatly. It would still be understandable if a robber was stripping off the equipment from his dead retainer, but if there was a possibility that the corpse was moved then it was a different story.

Because if it was just a robber, then there wasn’t any need to do such thing.

I understood that explanation I was given.

"Aa, because of that they think that it’s suspicious. That it’s not just a robber. But, the possibility of the retainer trespassing into other territory also cannot be denied……"

The unmotivated Fifth said in respond to me.

[Lyle, don’t get too deeply involved with this case. It looks like your work is already finished, there is no need to do anything more than this.]

Certainly, Ventra-san dispatched me because he didn’t want a dispute between caregiver to occur, so if the other party noticed that intention it was like my work was over already.

"Is that fine? Also……how long do I have to stay here?"

The Second touched his chin while,

[Well, Lyle can stand in the middle so that both sides will talk to each other. There won’t be any conclusion reached anyway, so the caregivers will get involved to mediate for both sides.]

The Third also nodded.

[After all there isn’t anything like solution that will convince both sides in this kind of problem. Well, it will be over if at some point when a compromise plan is given I think?]

It felt tedious, but it seemed it was something like that. But, the First’s opinion differed.

[What? Will he withdraw after his retainer got killed? Besides Bagan House is also cowardly. If the other side is finding fault with them then they should just pick up weapon and fight. If it’s me there will be absolutely no mercy.]

The First folded his arms. If it was him, then it felt like he would really march to face the other side.

"It feels like you have been doing nothing except fighting your surrounding until now."

However the Second shrugged.

[No, there wasn’t any fighting or anything like that.]

"Eh!?"

It was shocking that this hot-blooded the First wasn’t doing any fighting. When I looked at the Third he nodded. And then, he explained to me the situation of Walt House at that time.

[Lyle, you were already told before but, the First was a dragon slayer……a “dragon killer”. What’s more he crushed one solo. He was also a mighty warrior who subdued the troublesome savage tribe at

the area with strength. Who would dare to pick a fight with him? Even if a trouble occurred, the other party will draw back, and our caregiver was really scared of him. That's not a lie okay.]

Around the territory of Walt House, other than Forxus House that was in good relationship with Walt House, all the other territories were fearing the First.

It seemed this was the first time the First heard it.

[Eh, is that so? So that wasn't a joke.]

Why is the person himself doesn't know?

The Third explained seriously.

[The Second was more or less better but, he prioritized efficiency and used bow even though he was a noble then he went around defeating tons of monster and bandit, when I became the new head and went around making courtesy calls to my caregiver and the surrounding feudal lords, I was surprised. Haha~, it was really terrible. When I saw the other side trembling, I was able to understand just how much we were feared by them.]

The Second averted his face from the gazes of me and other ancestors.

[N, no, but I was also proactively participating in the monster subjugation and bandit subjugation that the caregiver requested you know? I don't think I did anything to make us that feared……I also properly did the courtesy call and associating with the neighbors!]

The Third laughed a bit sadly.

[Fuh, until I became the head, the surrounding feudal lords only kept the minimum association with us. If Forxus House wasn't there,

we would be completely isolated. In the first place, even the caregiver's request was told to us via Forxus House.]

I think Walt House had too much debt toward Forxus House that it couldn't be counted. It felt like all the ancestors without exception had been indebted to them.

It was shocking that Walt House was feared that much, but thinking carefully it was the First who was like this.

Telling them to not fear him might be impossible.

And then, the Fourth cleared his throat.

[Now then, what is the opinion of the three of you?]

The First until the Third expressed their opinion.

[That's obvious. Make the people concerned fight it out to settle the case!]

[Well, it's pointless to even get involved. In this kind of case there is also the accumulated dissatisfaction of many years. There is no meaning even if only the problem this time get solved so leave them be.]

[Conclusion! Let's stay for around a week and then go home! The request will be ended with that, then pester Ventra-kun persistently to give extra on the reward!]

The splendid conclusion that was reached was to abandon, or rather to not care of anything else as long as the job is finished.

The Fourth was also relieved.

[Isn't that right. There is no use even if Lyle get involved. However, in that case the period of time he is staying in this place will be

wasted. There is a forest nearby, so let's make him accumulate experience there.]

The Sixth also folded his arms and nodded.

[No objection!]

The Fifth sighed.

[The dependent's quarrel is troublesome. This kind of thing also gave me hardships at my time.]

The Seventh seemed dissatisfied.

[Making Lyle do this kind of thing……that damn Ventra brat, I'll remember this.]

Like this it was decided for me to not get involved with the problem this time. Was it really alright with this?

Chapter 22 – Confession

—The night when Lyle and others headed to the territory of Maini House.

Novem and Aria were preparing hot water inside the hut and wiped their body. They also wiped their clothes, finished their meal, and when they had also finished taking care of the horse, they obtained free time.

"I wonder if those three are all right?"

Novem sat on the floor while polishing the staff that was her weapon.

"It’s alright. Sophia-san is acquainted with the feudal lord of that territory, and Zelphy-san is also with them."

When Sophia’s name came out, Aria hugged her knees and slightly looked down.

"Sophia huh…….Is it as I thought, that the type of girl that Lyle like is someone like her?"

Aria compared herself and Sophia.

Sophia was pretty with long and silky black hair. Besides, she also had calm atmosphere that was unlike her, and her breast was big adding to her femininity.

When Novem heard those words of Aria,

"Lyle-sama doesn’t hate Aria-san."

But, Aria also had realized.

"But, he is troubled isn't he? Even at the talk of buying me out of the brothel, Lyle wasn't involved in it. I'm happy to be saved but, it feels like I'm only clinging on Lyle……my feeling, is a bit heavy."

Novem made a troubled expression while starting to talk about Lyle's past quietly.

"Lyle-sama was driven out from his house that was a house of count. He fought with his little sister Celes-sama, and he lost in a really terrible way."

Aria was feeling doubtful toward that story. She had heard about it but, she couldn't imagine that Lyle who won against the leader of the bandit group was weak. In fact, after spending time together with him for a while, she also understood that his movement was different from them.

That was why Aria was feeling excessively down.

Because she couldn't be useful to Lyle.

"That's a bit strange. I cannot imagine Lyle losing……. Besides, he doesn't look so bad that he would get driven out. Sometimes I happened to see him looking troubled because of the somewhat strange side of him though."

Novem spoke clearly.

"You mean Lyle-sama's ignorance of the world. But, that can't be helped. Lyle-sama received terrible treatment from his house. Besides, he is unable to find worth from himself."

"His own worth? Bu, but, Lyle can also use magic. He will immediately collapse after that but, his skill with sword is also in a different level."

Novem shook her head.

"Even so, he cannot recognize himself. Lyle-sama continued to lose and received cold treatment, so he doesn’t have confidence. Lyle-sama spoke unconfidently is because of that. He is ignorant of the world because all this time he had been confined in the mansion. He is also not good with associating with people."

"I, I see. Lyle also has it really hard. Perhaps someone like me is still more blessed than him."

Aria pondered about Lyle’s environment.

(He was confined inside his house and became ignorant of the world, and he lost against his little sister and got driven out. It’s a bit strange but, Zelphy also said the same thing so it must be true. But, if that’s the case……)

Aria murmured.

"Can I, be useful for Lyle?"

Novem smiled.

"Yes, even now Aria-san is being useful."

"How?"

"Lyle-sama is learning various things even by simply talking with Aria-san and others. I think he will sometimes give cold impression too, but it’s because he is unable to understand how to interact with other. That’s why, he really doesn’t understand. I want Aria-san to stay beside Lyle-sama who is like that. You are already helpful just by accompanying him."

Aria asked the question in her mind toward Novem.

"I’ve been thinking that it’s strange since some time ago."

"What is?"

"Why is Novem going that far for Lyle? If it’s because you are his former fiancée and you love him, you won’t want me or Sophia to get close to him won’t you? Because……"

Novem put her hand on her lips and chuckled. In that moment the lantern’s fire died out and the lighting was lost.

"Thank you very much for your consideration. But, it’s fine. Because that is Lyle-sama’s wish, and it’s also for Lyle-sama’s own sake."

Due to the moonlight shining in from the window, she could see that Novem was smiling. For a moment she was unable to see her expression, but Aria could see that Novem was saying that with seriousness.

"……His wish, is to be surrounded with women?"

Novem spoke.

"Certainly that’s not a good thing. But, I think the person himself doesn’t really understand what kind of meaning such thing has. Besides……"

"Besides?"

"Lyle-sama need someone else other than me to give him support."

Saying that Novem made a slightly sad look—.

.

—The afternoon of the next day.

Just like yesterday, Novem and Aria were practicing magic at an open space that was a slight distance away from the village. It was then Dale and Zappa visited them.

The two paused their magic practice and asked what the two’s business was.

"Pardon me, is there something? We have received permission to use this spot though?"

Dale was acting a bit timidly at Novem’s words.

"N, no, it’s not about that……you see"

Aria was also puzzled at Dale’s vague attitude.

"If it’s Lyle and others then I think they will return within today. So if you have something to talk about—"

Then, Zappa was unable to bear with Dale’s attitude and opened his mouth.

"Aa, irritating! Look here, I want to ask a bit, you two can use magic right?"

Novem affirmed it.

"Yes. If there is something that you need help with, we will cooperate within reason but……"

Zappa cut off Novem’s words and pushed Dale’s back toward Aria. When Aria took a step back, Zappa said.

"Hey, you—won’t you marry Dale!?"

Aria was dumbfounded at the sudden proposal.

"……Ha?"

Dale tried to stop Zappa.

"Zappa, as I thought something like this isn’t good."

"Why are you getting cold feet! This is a chance! Being able to use magic mean she is a noble. If you don’t marry and prepare a heir, who knows what’ll happen to this village! Besides, isn’t she cute!? It’s not like you hate her right? Right!?"

The sudden proposal and then the rude attitude bewildered both Novem and Aria. But, Novem heard Zappa’s statement and realized something.

"So the peeping tom yesterday was you. That’s not a laudable act."

Then Zappa glared at Novem.

"Wha, what. This is our village. Besides, you are an adventurer, that means you yourself have some kind of circumstance right? If it’s now you can become the legal wife of Bagan House. That’s far better future prospects compared to staying as rootless person like adventurer."

Then Aria shook her head.

"I, I can’t. Besides, I’m someone who was bought."

Then, Dale who was staying quiet looked at Aria in surprise.

"What do you mean by that?"

Aria looked toward Novem. Novem answered.

"Because of some circumstance, Aria-san right now is someone who was bought by Lyle-sama. Besides, she is working as our fellow comrades in our adventurer party. There is no way we can accept such proposal."

Zappa was about to doggedly argued—however, Dale pushed him aside and spoke strongly at Novem and Aria.

"That’s wrong! Buying someone like that, I don’t know the circumstance that caused such thing but……your name is Novem-san correct? You are that Lyle-kun’s—"

"I am his former fiancée. Right now I’m attending at his side."

Dale was clearly feeling indignation.

"He already has such person at his side and yet he was buying other woman……. Aria-san, if you are fine with me I will help you."

Even if he said he wanted to help, from Aria’s view it was a troubling story. They hadn’t told about the bandit group subjugation, how Aria’s father cooperated with that bandit group, and how she was saved by Lyle.

That was why Dale might be thinking that Lyle was making Aria his using an inhuman method.

"No, that’s alright. My current situation is—"

When Aria was about to talk, Paola was running toward the four who were arguing.

"Dale, Zappa! The three has returned. It looks like we will be able to avoid any fighting from happening!"

Paola might be feeling relieved form the report of Lyle and others, because she was making a really nice smile. She must wanted to report to the two as fast as possible because apparently she had been running around searching for the two.

But, Paola was surprised seeing Dale’s serious expression.

"What’s wrong?"

Zappa shrugged while Dale’s shoulders were shaking.

"……I’m going to meet Lyle-kun."

Saying that Dale walked away from that place. The four were staring at his back each with different feeling.

.

[Don’t screw around, this shitty braattttt!!]

The First raged.

The location was the open field a slight distance away from the village.

The ground was slightly gouged. Sign from magic practice could be seen.

The villagers gathered as curious onlookers. Quite the number of people came to the open space and stared at the two people who were glaring at each other.

The two people confronting each other at the open field were Aria-san who was holding her spear and—.

"I absolutely won’t forgive you!"

Sophia-san who was taking a stance with her battle axe—.

"That’s my line!"

How did it turn out like this? I don’t know the reason. I turned my gaze to Novem who was standing beside me.

"Novem, what’s going on?"

Novem was also looking troubled. Zelphy-san who was unable to comprehend the situation was also looking at Novem.

"I also want to ask that. Why was the lord-sama yelled angrily at Lyle when we returned, and then why did it become a duel between Aria and Sophia from there?"

We who returned to the village told Paola-san that the talk was a success and asked her to call Dale-san. Paolan-san was really happy hearing our news and went to search for Dale-san.

After a while Dale-san came. I remember that for some reason he was really angry and said various complaints at me.

I remember but, there Sophia-san cut in.

"Please stop already! Even though we have been working really hard for the sake of this village……Lyle-dono too! I wish that you behave more reliably! What's with your attitude like that. Please act with more dignity."

"Ye, yes."

Sophia-san was angry at my indecisive look or perhaps at me looking stumped. Well, certainly I thought that my attitude is no good. But, I was flustered when suddenly getting scolded like this.

Did I do something bad?

The problem was after that. Novem and Aria-san who came running cut in between me and Sophia-san.

Aria-san was angry at Sophia-san who was angry at me. Then Sophia-san talked back to Aria-san and the two heated up further.

And it resulted in the current scene.

Novem explained the situation at us once more.

"Actually, Dale-san made a marriage proposal to Aria-san……. That's, the proposal didn't come from the mouth of the person himself. But, it's true that a talk of marriage was brought to us."

Zelphy-san nodded.

"No, I heard that already. The problem is, what brought such talk to happen, and……why is Ojou-sama is angry at Sophia?"

Well, we had heard about that story on the way here. I also heard about the reason of the sharp glare from Dale-san and Zappa-san. It seemed they couldn't approve that I bought Aria-san even though I had Novem already. They didn't hear the full story, so it caused the misunderstanding.

However, the First who heard the story was raging.

[A shitty brat from this hole in nowhere, want to help? Don't screw around! Lyle, punch him! Punch him flying! I'll allow it! This guy is enemyyyy!!]

No, the talk would become complicated if I hit him so spare me.

Novem explained the situation with a troubled face.

"Actually, last night I told Aria-san about Lyle-sama. I think Aria-san cannot forgive Sophia-san's attitude toward Lyle-sama because of that."

I turned my gaze toward the two.

The First spoke with a crying voice.

[Aria-chan, what a kind girl……]

But, the Seventh was backing up Sophia-san.

[However, Lyle who was shrinking back just because someone suddenly yelled at him is also in the wrong. Lyle, no matter what that kind of youngster said to you, you mustn’t get agitated. Some parts of what Sophia said are also correct.]

Well, it’s the fact that I was cowering back when I suddenly got yelled at. If it was that kind of circumstance then certainly it would be better if I acted boldly.

The First yelled at the Seventh.

[You are just getting led astray by the nape that you backed her up anyway! Aria-chan who is worried about Lyle is number one!]

[What is bad about nape! Also, have you forgotten about Novem’s devotion?]

A low level quarrel was starting, so I returned my focus to the two girls.

The two facing each other were hurling abuse while holding their respective weapon.

"Be a bit more considerate! You came here to repay your debt aren’t you!"

"It’s exactly because I wish to repay my debt that I give warning at what should be warned at!"

The two finally stepped toward each other and began fighting. Sophia-san swung the heavy battle axe horizontally, but Aria-san easily dodged.

"You spoke of repaying debt, but you still cannot do anything in reality!"

Aria-san’s spear thrust consecutively toward Sophia-san. Sophia-san used her battle axe like a shield to endure the attacks.

Metal clashed with each other and sparks scattered.

"You too are the same! I’m aware that I’m a burden, but you are also the same!"

Sophia-san forcefully closed the distance and swung her battle axe with all her might, but Aria-san easily parried the attack and made her stumbled.

"I know that already! But, but……there is better way for you to speak!"

The Fifth’s voice came from inside the Jewel.

[For Lyle’s sake is it? Well, she is a good girl I guess.]

The First was happy there was someone who agreed with him.

[Right!? Aria-chan is a good girl.]

However the Second seemed to be dissatisfied.

[Then, I wish she won’t cause problem like this. Besides, Sophia’s opinion is correct. Rather, it’s problematic if there is one more person other than Novem-chan who is spoiling Lyle. Someone strict is needed.]

The Sixth jokingly said,

[Well, there is already seven strict people here though.]

Certainly they’re strict. Really strict people. For example at first they would severely criticized me without any consideration and then made a ruckus which caused my fainting. I really wish they would spare me from such thing.

Sophia-san stood up and lifted up her battle axe. The battle axe that was a lump of metal was extremely heavy.

She faced Aria-san with that.

"……It should be said strongly if thinking about the sake of that person. Besides, I intend to repay back my debt too someday. I don’t want to be told about it by you."

Sophia-san stood up covered in mud. Aria-san seemed to be pressured and shut her mouth. But, apparently she had no intention to lower her weapon.

I unconsciously muttered seeing these two.

"Err, what should I do in this kind of time……"

Those words were directed not only to the ancestors inside the Jewel, but also to Novem and Zelphy-san. But, the reaction of the ancestors by turn was—.

[Root for Aria-chan!]

[It will be awkward if he root for one side idiot!]

[Yosh, got it. Hug those two here and make the situation inconclusive.]

[Are you having fun Third? Lyle, in this case you should persuade both of them.]

[Explosive is something to be handled before it explode, after it has exploded I think it’s better to not get near.]

[I got an idea! Cheer for both of them!]

[Won’t it be fine if you come between them at suitable timing?]

It would be over if I cut in between them before it turned dangerous. Certainly that might be so. I looked at the saber on my waist in preparation so I could jump anytime.

Then Zelphy-san placed her hand on my shoulder.

"Let them do this. It seems Ojou-sama is harboring a bit irritation at Sophia. It’s important to let them throw their dissatisfaction at each other."

Novem asked Zelphy-san.

"Is that how is it? But as expected isn’t this dangerous?"

The two in front of us were swinging weapon at each other and literally scattered sparks everywhere. Aria-san pointed her left hand forward and yelled.

"Fire Bullet!"

A small fire ball was fired from Aria-san’s left hand, but Sophia-san swept it away with her battle axe.

"Only this much!"

However, Aria-san took advantage of the opening from the swing and stepped closer. The two clashed with the handle of their spear and battle axe pushing at each other. And then they were glaring toward each other from really close distance.

Sophia-san was slightly irritated.

"Even I……know that I’m not useful! That’s why I want to become of use for Lyle-dono even if only a little!"

Then Sophia-san’s atmosphere suddenly changed at that timing.

The First noticed something and showed interest to Sophia-san.

[Hee, that girly, not bad.]

The Second also agreed.

[Yeah, you're right. Lyle, watch carefully. You can only rarely witness this after all……she is manifesting her Art.]

Right after that, the battle axe that was swung around heavily until now was lifted up by Sophia-san lightly with one hand.

Aria-san was blown away and she looked at Sophia-san in surprise. She fixed her stance and stared at Sophia-san.

Sophia-san was also looking at her right hand that was holding the battle axe in surprise. The battle axe that she wielded with both hands until now was lifted with one hand.

Furthermore, it was done lightly.

Zelphy-san whistled. And then she spoke in delight.

"The match is decided I guess. I never thought she would manifest an Art. Is it strengthening type? But, with this Sophia has become drastically stronger."

However Novem immediately replied.

"No, it seems it's not strengthening type."

It didn't look like her physical strength was strengthened. The Third agreed with Novem's opinion.

[Looks like it. If I have to say which is it……it looks like the battle axe is the one that become lighter. That's an interesting Art.]

It's just as the Third said. There was no change in Sophia-san.

She swung around her battle axe to ascertain the sensation, then Sophia-san took a stance and charged at Aria-san. Unlike before, her movement was sharp and faster due to the lighter weight.

"With this!"

This time Aria-san was pushed into defending. She could only dodge the battle axe and was troubled with her inability to approach closer.

Zelphy-san shrugged.

"The match is decided. Lyle, let’s go and stop them."

I nodded and moved to enter between them, but Novem caught my sleeve and stopped me. Novem’s eyes were staring straight at Aria-san.

"Not yet."

"Eh?"

Then the First yelled.

[It’s here! It’s here, it’s here! It’s right hereee!!]

The excited voice of the First made me thought that something happened to Aria-san and turned toward her. The red Gem hanging on Aria-san’s neck shined, and then Aria-san’s body also shined—with red, faint light.

The Sixth groaned.

[This match’s outcome become unsure with this. Now then, the problem is how you’ll stop them, but……]

The figure of Aria-san kicking on the ground looked like she instantly vanished. But, that wasn’t the case. She was moving with a speed that she had never shown before.

When Sophia-san took a defensive stance with her battle axe, sparks flew and Aria-san’s figure came into view.

"I won’t lose only against you!"

The Art of Aria-san who was moving quickly……surely it was an Art that belonged only to Aria-san that wasn’t recorded inside the red Gem.

The two were fighting even more fiercely than before and sparks scattered around intensely. Aria-san moved around while attacking. On the other hand Sophia-san was swinging around her battle axe defensively.

While such fighting was continuing, the Third sighed.

[Hm, this is as far as they go. Lyle, let’s stop them. Try using Art at the timing when the two separate. Use the Second’s Art and the First’s Art at them.]

I thought that the two would be strengthened and it would be disastrous if I did that, but the Second also agreed. The other ancestors also didn’t oppose it. I see, this is the same like when using the Fourth’s Art.

[Aah, there is that method huh.]

But, it was only the First who didn’t understand.

[Oi, what’s going to happen by doing that?]

I measured the timing for using the Arts. The two took distance from each other after a conspicuously large sparks scattered around. No, it was Aria-san who was taking a large distance.

They were both running out of breath and dripping with sweat.

[Lyle, now. Also, look carefully……. What will happen if Art is suddenly used at other people.]

I used the Arts at the Third's signal, strengthening the two.

Then—.

"With this it's o—ver-!?"

"Even—I!?"

When the two who were going to jump at each other kicked on the ground, the next moment, they stumbled grandly. Aria-san pitched forward and slid. Sophai-san stumbled face up. The two stumbled simultaneously as though they had set it up beforehand.

The surrounding felt that it was somewhat sloppy with the way the intense battle ended stupidly. Sighing voices and jeering flew at the two.

The Third laughed.

[Ahahaha, that's funny right? It's different from their own senses, so they will stumble no matter what and fail. Some practice is necessary when Art is used to other .]

The Second warned the laughing Third.

[Idiot, anyone will be flustered when their strength suddenly increase. That will be even more so when the influence come from other person. Well, that's how it is. Lyle, do you understand?]

I was able to understand, but would I get scolded when they realized that it was me who caused this? More importantly, I have to help the two who fell down.

"Zelphy-san, let’s go help them. Also Novem……prepare hot water and anything necessary to treat wound."

"Yes, Lyle-sama."

Novem smiled.

Zelphy-san seemed to be questioning the strange way the battle ended.

"Lyle, you did something just now."

I who was being doubted tried to explain, but I gave up and moved toward the two.

.

We returned to the cramped hut where we were staying.

Novem used magic to give medical treatment to the two, then she prepared hot water and wiped off the dirt on them. It was no good if a man like me was present for such thing, so I was outside the hut sitting on a wooden box.

When I looked up there was the sunset. I didn’t get tired looking at it.

While I was staring at the sight in a daze, Zelphy-san came out.

"How is the two?"

"After the treatment and cleaning of their body were finished, they ate dinner and then fell asleep. It looks like they really forced themselves, it might be hard for them tomorrow with their body

feeling the pain. Perhaps they might go through “growth”, so perhaps we will have to lock them up tomorrow."

"Lock them up?"

I couldn’t understand about locking people up due to growth. Then Zelphy-san looked at me and tilted her head.

"Well of course. It’s dangerous after all when they are feeling uplifted. They shouldn’t be allowed to go outside as much as possible. Well, there is also case where it can’t be done though."

I because curious just what happened because of “growth” that it was necessary to go that far. According to the ancestors, the person would be in high spirits and committed miss that normally they wouldn’t do.

Zelphy-san laughed.

"There is also difference between people in this kind of thing after all. How was it for you when it happened to you?"

"N, no, I—"

"Don’t hide it. Or perhaps, did you make embarrassing failure?"

While we are conversing like that, Paola-san came to the hut. She looked really apologetic.

Zelphy-san folded her arms and welcomed her with a hard expression.

"E, excuse me, I’m really sorry for what happened today!"

Paola-san deeply bowed. Zelphy-san complained to her.

"It’s not our business who your associate is proposing to, but doing that to our party member even after knowing the state of their

relationship is problematic. People have some part that they don’t want other to touch. Just explain about this kinda thing to that boy properly."

Paola-san’s eyes were teary.

After all the feudal lord made a marriage proposal to my comrade when we came to secure this village’s safety. Furthermore, he did that toward Aria-san who was in the position as someone bought by me.

"I’m sorry. Truly I’m very sorry!"

I thought that she had it hard even though she was still young so I was going to forgive her already, but the Second stopped me.

[Lyle, don’t forgive this matter. The person himself should be the one coming to apologize to you for this kind of matter. You did your job. And yet that youngster……]

For the ancestors, most people were youngster compared to them. Their appearance inside the Jewel was youthful like in their golden days, but in reality their age wasn’t young.

No, was the Third who died in battle young because he died in the same age like his appearance?

The First was enraged.

[Punch his face at least once! Only then you can forgive him!]

I’m the one punching? Honestly I’m reluctant to do that. I want to finish the job without anything happening and then go home.

I looked at Paola-san in front of me.

"Say, what about the person himself?"

Paola-san became even more teary.

"Tha, that……please listen without getting angry."

Chapter 23 – Kind Feudal Lord

Inside the Jewel.

The ancestors were exasperated. From the viewpoint of the ancestors who were feudal lord, apparently the current head of Bagan House, Dale-san was just too hopeless.

Which one is more hopeless between both of us? ……I would feel frustrated for some reason if both of us were compared and I lost, so I didn’t ask the ancestors.

The Second was flabbergasted.

[It was already apparent since the first meeting, but this is the worst.]

These seven were exasperated at Dale-san’s action. Their respective reason was different, but they were giving Dale-san the lowest evaluation.

The Third gave a follow up for Dale-san.

[As an individual he give a favorable impression though. But, that’s only as an individual. As a feudal lord I can only say that he is the worst.]

The fact that Paola-san told me.

It was the fact that Dale-san left the apologizing to Paola-san. It seemed there was someone who told the feudal lord Dale-san, that there was no need for him to lower his head to adventurer like us.

Well, it must be Zappa-san.

"But, certainly I am an adventurer. Besides, looking at how he is listening to his people’s opinion……isn’t he a good feudal lord?"

The Fifth frowned at me.

[Lyle, you don’t understand anything. Certainly I think there is no problem with Dale as an individual. In fact, he is a good guy to have as friend. But, he isn’t suited as feudal lord.]

The Seventh looked disinterested.

[Listening to other’s opinion and acting as yes-man are two different matter. Well, in the case of that youngster Dale, the problem is before that.]

The Sixth also nodded.

[You can see from his appearance and his attitude. He is giving the blunt impression that he is a hundred percent the ally of the people. That’s irritating.]

The Sixth who was usually kind used the word irritating to call Dale-san. It was a bit unexpected.

From my eyes, Dale-san was an agreeable youth who was working together with the villagers.

Besides, I heard that at first the village’s populace was happy when Dale-san succeeded the feudal lord position.

The First hit the table many times with both his hands.

[Appearance or whatever doesn’t matter! He said that he want to save Aria-chaan? What’s more, giving her better life than adventurer he saiid? Bullshit! This village, it’s really poor no matter how you cut it! It’s even poorer compared to my era!]

I tilted my head hearing that.

"Eh? But, as expected there is no way he is poorer than me who is just an adventurer right? Then, if Aria-san wish for it……"

The First was looking dumbfounded at me.

[Work harder at that! Aria-chan getting intimate with that brat is just nightmareeeee!!]

The Fourth pushed his glasses with his fingertip and explained to me.

[Lyle, certainly feudal lord obtain tax from the people. You might think that they aren't poor but……depending on the scale even a feudal lord of a settlement, they can be poor too bluntly speaking.]

When I looked around, the Third who seemed to be knowledgeable about the circumstance of something like this nodded.

[That's right. Well, it's also depending on the situation too. If the settlement has a specialty product, then it's also possible to earn revenue from different area. But, a feudal lord fundamentally will hire servants for their mansion. They have to pay personnel expenses and also various expenses like for entertaining guest and so on. Also, I think it's pointless but an appearance that suits their status is also necessary. The expense for that cannot be sneezed at.]

[It's not pointless after all. It's a necessary expense.]

The Fourth corrected the Third's opinion while talking about Dale-san. It seemed this was also a part of my society study.

[He lowered the tax, dismissed the servants of the mansion, and live alone. He is also working hard in the farm and builds a really close relationship with the populace. An agreeable youth who work hard and kind to everyone. He get along well with people around his age and also take the initiative to work. Wonderful! If he is a mere villager and not a feudal lord then he will be perfect.]

Is that no good?

"Err, as expected from everyone's tone he is no good isn't it? What is it that is no good from him?"

Then the Second asserted.

[Everything.]

"Everything!? Eh, is there nothing good about him even if only a bit?"

The Second put his hand on his forehead and said to me.

[Look here, Lyle. A feudal lord has duty with the tax that they received. Do you think it can be forgiven if he abandon that duty?]

The Fifth also had the same opinion.

[This happen sometimes. A guy who will be better if only he isn't in his current position. It's also the same with Dale. If he is a mere villager then he will be a reliable person. But, as a feudal lord he is the worst.]

The Third was smiling, but it was a slightly scary smile.

[Honestly, I think that what he is doing is pushing that village to self-destruction. Until now he might be the second son who live at home and served as the spare for the eldest son. There is also part of him that can be pitied with how the leaders of the village all died in battle……but I also feel, so what?]

The Second folded her arms and looked at me.

[If he feel like it, he can also ask for help from Ventra. He can also get along with the surrounding feudal lords. In fact, that Medard was like that wasn't he? He said that because he know that it was hard for Dale at the beginning after he only took over as the house head, he went around alone to apologize to the surrounding feudal lords.]

"But, is there any need to force yourself that far to get along with the surrounding……"

The Fourth agreed to that.

[Well, certainly it’s not good if you overdo it. In fact, there are bad feudal lords who cause their people to suffer. Or rather, there are many like that.]

As I thought there are many.

The Third stretched up while saying.

[They also misunderstand because they are in that position since their birth. Ah, it’s not like this only apply to feudal lord type noble. The populace is also like that.]

"The populace too?"

The Fifth answered apathetically.

[The populace pay tax in order to secure their safety, and also to make use of the great authority. For example……the fight of Aria and Sophia like today. They cannot settle it no matter what. Or perhaps, it will be troubling if it’s settled so you interfere between them.]

"Ye, yes."

[Do you think the dissatisfaction of those two will vanish like that? It won’t. Even so they obeyed you because you are the party leader.]

The Sixth made fun of me with an amused face.

[No, perhaps they obeyed because they are in love with Lyle you know?]

[Whichever is fine! Someone will end up acting as mediator within a group. It's at that kind of time, just as Sophia said, you have to act more firmly. After all the lives of those three are entrusted to you.]

Certainly that's true. When I thought that, I realized that from Sophia-san's perspective, my indecisive attitude must be unforgivable.

The Fifth cleared his throat.

[Listen, Lyle. Sometimes there will be a split of opinion between your comrades. It will be you who make the decision at that kind of time. Someone might be dissatisfied by your decision. Even so, in order for the party to survive and earn money, it's necessary that you make the decision.]

The Seventh gave me advice.

[Novem and Aria, then Sophia……don't you think it's hard to listen to their opinion and make a decision that satisfy them all? Let's see, right now it's fine because there are only three of them, but what about if your party member grow to five people or six people?]

The Sixth declared.

[Someone will be dissatisfied. Perhaps they will even stop listening to you and act on their own.]

The Third summed up what the Fifth wanted to say.

[For example if Lyle is a feudal lord, and the other three are villagers. The three follow you because Lyle is working to make the group survive. If the four of you in the same position have different opinions, the group will be in disorder. It will be harder to survive than before, and you also might be unable to earn money.]

I somehow get it.

The feudal lord had responsibility, and the populace entrusted them to make the decision.

"Eh? But, the populace cannot choose where they were born at right? It feels like their situation is different from us who are in the chosen position……"

The Fourth shook his head.

[This is only example. Besides, feudal lord also cannot choose their birth. Well, no matter who they are people cannot choose their birth after all.]

The Second spoke out his conclusion.

[In short, from the start you cannot do something like satisfying the whole populace. Even so, it's necessary for Dale to act for the sake of pushing that village to a good direction no matter how small, even if the surrounding doesn't understand what he is doing. He is the existence that protect and guide his people. He is entrusted to make the decision in order to better their living as much as possible. Well, it's easy for both sides to forget about that though.]

Just how many feudal lords there are who are always conscious of such thing? Besides, compared to the populace, it would be easier for the feudal lord who held authority from their birth to become rotten.

Squeezing out tax from the populace and then tormenting them. Feudal lord who didn't think about their people—the ancestors said that Dale-san's act was similar with that. No, perhaps he was even worse because he looked like he was abandoning all his responsibility.

The Third raised his index finger and turned a smile at me.

[By the way, the best feudal lord that the populace wished for is—]

The First declared.

[A strong guy!]

The Second laughed self-derisively.

[One who don’t levy tax I guess.]

The Fourth thought a bit before,

[……One who prioritized his people above all thing I think.]

The Fifth apathetically said,

[A feudal lord who won’t meddle.]

The Sixth stroked his beard while,

[But, one who will help for free when they need to be helped or saved.]

The Seventh folded his arms and made a complicated expression.

[……One who won’t get involved in war.]

The Third spread out his hands and said.

[On the contrary, the best populace that the feudal lord wished for is an existence who pay a lot of tax, doesn’t cause any trouble, won’t defy and obey everything. From the beginning the opinion of both sides is already different!]

What an unpleasant difference. But, it felt like both opinions matched in how both were impossible.

There was no feudal lord who wouldn’t levy tax, and the people also didn’t want an existence that was only taking tax.

The Third slightly laughed and turned serious after taking a breath.

[Both sides cannot exist with each other like that, that's why they can only compromise. Everyone is living toward different direction. But like that they won't be able to live properly. It's strict but, someone has to decide the direction.]

Everyone was living with different direction.

Hearing that, I looked around at the seven people.

"……The seven of you are also like that isn't it?"

Even though they were all from the same family, their opinion didn't match at all. Looking from that point, I could understand just how difficult it was to unify differing opinions.

The Fifth snorted.

[Exactly as you said. ……If you can talk sarcastically like that then you understand right? Even if their method differed, feudal lords have responsibility to lead their charge. That's why they are taking tax. Sometimes they would be hated, even so that's included in the job. But, sometimes there are also those who act as they pleased without caring any of that but people are still following that person.]

The Fourth nodded.

[Aa, I get what you mean. There are people like that isn't it, they have this thing called charm, or charisma. Just by moving people will follow them. That type of people is really envious.]

The First and the Sixth spoke curiously.

[Hee, so there is that kind of person.]

[What an envious story.]

Hearing the words of the two, the Second and the Sixth, and then the Seventh held their head.

[Shit-, why is this kind of person is……]

[For the person himself to not notice is just the worst.]

[I wish they will understand how hard it is for the person who succeeded their legacy.]

Unexpectedly Walt House also had charismatic feudal lords. It was the First and the Sixth apparently.

"……They doesn’t look like it."

The Third nodded at my words.

[Well, their action until that point is also related though. But, sometimes there is also a person with that kind of charisma. Like, everyone is following that person.]

At this time the face of Celes came to mind. An existence that charmed and whose word was obeyed by everyone—.

I didn’t really want to recognize it.

The Third continued.

[But you know, that Dale-kun don’t have that kind of charisma. At best he is only someone capable. At this rate, a problem will occur before long……it’s unknown whether he will be able to deal with it.]

The Third’s expression was serious.

And then the Forth concluded.

[Well, let’s end this talk here, what we want to say is]

"What you want to say is?"

[Don’t poke your nose at the situation of other house. Lyle yourself is managing your own party. You don’t have any free time to get

involved with the situation of a stranger’s house, and this situation is also very problematic in various aspects. Let’s just ignore it. It looks like your job is already finished, that’s the priority. Or rather……this is really bothersome isn’t it? Even if we got involved with the hopeless feudal lord Dale-kun there is no profit to be had……]

All the ancestors had the same opinion.

……As expected it’s that kind of flow after coming to this point? If it’s these seven people then I have the feeling that they have a solution for the problem though.

However, apparently they had no motivation to help. I think that it’s a bit cold while also noticing that I who am thinking like that am the one who cannot do anything.

In the end, I was made to realize that I’m unable to do conspicuous effort like a main character that appeared in story.

.

The next day.

"Recently I kept getting called inside the Jewel."

I who rose from bed while complaining looked at the partition that was prepared inside the hut. It was a cloth that separated me from the female camp.

When I woke up and tried going outside, there was Aria-san who was going outside using her spear as cane to support her body this early in the morning.

"……Are you alright?"

"Eh!? Ah, it hurts-!"

Aria-san who turned around toward me was unable to endure the pain of her body and sat down on the spot.

I rushed toward her and held her shoulder to support her, but it seemed that doing that was also painful for her and she screamed.

"Hiih!"

"So, sorry!"

While we were floundering around, the Second's voice came from the Jewel.

[It's not "growth" huh. She overused her Art after it just manifested. Lyle, make her stay in bed for today.]

Aria-san's eyes turned tearful.

"I'm sorry. My body feels more painful than yesterday……I want to test the feeling of yesterday for a bit at the morning but, my whole body is in pain."

The Fourth said that it couldn't be helped.

[Well of course. Unlike me, it's a rapid acceleration that is specialized for battle. Well, if she rest for one day……no, two day then she will be fine.]

The Third also spoke in envy.

[How nice. The vanguard type Art has explosive power, so when it manifest you will certainly become stronger by leaps and bounds. My Art is plain in comparison.]

The Fourth was exasperated.

[Please don't spout such lie. Isn't your Art the most horrible among all of us here?]

I ignored the voices of the ancestors while helping Aria-san to stand and return toward the hut.

"Use my shoulder."

Aria-san looked terribly in pain. She was sweating heavily and desperately endured her pain. I lifted her with my arm and lent her my shoulder carefully so to not stimulate her pain. I placed my right hand around her waist and pulled her closer, firmly fixing her body in place. It felt like Aria-san's complexion became slightly better. Her pale face turned faintly red.

"Thank you, Lyle."

When we were walking slowly like that, there was someone running toward the hut. It was the figure of two young men, Dale-san and Zappa-san.

"Dale, there is no doubt!"

"You bastard!"

It looked like Zappa-san led Dale-san here. Dale-san clenched his fist and suddenly swung at me.

[This shitty brat, who do you think you're picking with huhhhh!!]

Hearing the First's roar, I returned to my senses in surprise and swept away Dale-san's fist with my left hand.

Dale-san's fist was parried like that. It looked like he was punching with all his strength.

"No, what are you doing?"

Aria-san became tearful and shaking from my movement. Her body was helplessly in pain.

Dale-san and Zappa-san glared at me.

"You are making that girl cry! I saw it myself!"

Zappa-san pointed at Aria-san and yelled angrily, but it seemed Aria-san couldn’t pay attention to that. The pain from her whole body—it seemed she wanted to lay down as fast as possible.

"Spare me already. It hurt. It really hurt. That’s why, really don’t……aa, it feels like strange sweat is coming out."

Her voice was also trembling, and because she was talking in a small voice, it didn’t reach the two. The amount of her sweating increased. As expected I don’t think she can stay like this.

Zappa-san moved toward me and clenched his fist while grinning.

"I’ll teach a spoiled brat raised in the city like you the reality! Don’t get high and mighty just because you are surrounded with women!"

Did he have a grudge against me? Frankly speaking it’s a bother, but the Third was laughing. However, at the end his voice was low.

[This neighborhood bully really said it eh~. ……Lyle, let’s teach him. What reality is.]

Zappa-san made a large swing and punched toward me. It looked like it had more momentum and power than Dale-san, but it was easy to avoid. I caught his arm with my left hand and my foot tripped him.

"Bastard! Don’t get carried away!"

Yep, how should I say it, he isn’t scary. If it’s like this, the fist of the vassal who punched me at the mansion back then was still sharper. It doesn’t look like he is as strong as he said.

Dale-san ran toward Zappa-san who tried to stand up.

Aria-san was tearfully gripping my clothes strongly while breathing roughly. I want to bring her to the hut right away to let her lay down.

"Err, we are in a hurry so I'll listen to what you have to say later. I will take you on at that time too please."

Dale-san grabbed my shoulder. He is glaring at me.

"Wait! Just what did you do to Aria-sa—"

Dale-san shook my body. Then the shaking was transmitted to Aria-san and her pained body was shook intensely—.

"—Shut up, you idiots!!"

A very low threatening voice was spoken out. The three of us looked at Aria-san's face. One of her eyebrows were twitching up and down, and she galred at Dale-san and Zappa-san with her expression unclear whether she was smiling or angry.

"You two dare showing your face from the morning huh, you jerks. I haven't forgotten the matter yesterday y'know! If you two dare to show your face together, then start apologizing! Apologize by rubbing those empty heads there on the ground!"

The ancestors inside the Jewel fell silent hearing the threatening voice of Aria-san. No, it was only the First who—.

[……Aria-chan. Don't. If a girl speak like that……I think, that's no good.]

You think!? Assert it clearly there! Or rather, Aria-san right now gave off a pressure that shut up even the ancestors.

I too cannot speak any words at this really unexpected happening. And then, the older two young men were also closing and opening their mouth in front of Aria-san.

"N, no, we heard a scream so, we came running—"

The two of them looked at each other's face and said things like "Ye, yeah. That's why I called you" and nodded repeatedly.

Hearing that Aria-san yelled even more angrily.

"I'm in pain here! Before you come punching because of strange misunderstanding, be tactful and get lost right away! You all useless dullards!! No one is calling you guys here! Read the atmosphere! Or else I'm gonna make you target for this spear, ***AAA***!!"

After the two returned—no, running away in panic, Aria-san calmed her breathing. She took a deep breath, and looked at me—.

"The, they suddenly attacked……i, it was scary. I also, lost myself and raised my voice."

Aria-san endured her pain and smiled. Looking at her I could only agree with her.

"……Right. It must be really scary."

I absolutely won't say that Aria-san was scary. But, yep……it was scary. Sorry, as I thought Aria-san was scary.

.

We returned to the room and I laid down Aria-san. Sophia-san was writhing in the futon next to her.

Pain ran through her when she tried to move. Sometimes her body would be convulsing and twitching.

"Auh!"

Novem approached the pained Sophia-san and said.

"It’s alright. Please lie down for a while. If you need something please say it to me or Zelphy-san."

……They should hear what happened outside, but it seemed they wouldn’t touch the subject. It seemed they had no intention to mention the matter of me getting into a dispute with the feudal lord and also Aria-san’s angry yell.

I slightly raised my hand toward Novem who was looking after the two who were lying down.

"Ca, can I help with something?"

Then Zelphy-san scratched her hair. Novem made a troubled face while refusing my offer gently.

"No, it’s fine. Lyle-sama, can we leave the work outside to you?"

I could hear the Fourth sighing.

[Lyle, leave helping the girl to other girl, you should work outside. After all a girl also have something that they cannot say to the opposite sex.

I’m free, so I tried walking around the village.

We were busy at the first and second day, so I haven’t taken a look leisurely at the village.

Then, I happened to see Dale-san helping an old woman who was carrying a heavy luggage.

"Granny, I’ll help you."

"Thank you very much."

Dale-san friendlily carried the heavy luggage. The surrounding villagers also greeted Dale-san with a smile. Dale-san replied with a smile. Children were running around Dale-san’s legs.

"Hey, big bro, let’s play!"

"Oi oi, I have to work in the farm after this. Let’s do that next time."

He laughed with a troubled expression. It looked like he was loved by the villagers.

From my eyes I couldn’t see him as a hopeless feudal lord at all. Even so it seems the ancestors consider him as hopeless. I muttered while watching from afar.

"He looks like a good person."

He tried to hit me also because he heard that Aria-san was crying. Thinking back, certainly he might be a good person as an individual.

But, I don’t know how he is as a feudal lord.

The Second muttered slightly happily.

[He is loved huh. Certainly, if it’s like this I can understand why people placed their expectation on him at first.]

"Isn’t it fine then? Besides, it looks like he will be able to manage somehow."

The First was irritated. Looks like he was aggravated by Dale-san’s marriage proposal to Aria-san.

[Who cares about that! I hate that guy. How dare he did such thing to Aria-chan……because of that guy’s fault Aria-chan spoke like that……]

The Second spoke a bit hesitantly.

[No, I think it's absolutely possible that's her base personality or something. You know, she has this side, like how the person herself likes to move her body, or how she isn't good with detailed work. Besides, she is a type of hit first ask later right? Surely that was her true self.]

The First's voice sounded like he was going to cry. I don't really care but, it was painful to see the crying figure of a middle-aged man.

[You're wrong! Aria-chan is a lady……god dammit!!]

I listened to the conversation of the ancestors while watching the tranquil scenery and the smiling villagers living there—along with the feudal lord Dale-san.

Chapter 24 – Close Friend

—Inside the cramped hut where Lyle and others were staying.

Aria and Sophia whose pain didn't get better at the slightest even after the noon passed were lying down on their futon.

Novem and Sylvia went outside and right now there were only the two of them.

Novem had grinded down wild grasses that were said to be effective for pain and smeared it on their body. The two of them were looking up to the ceiling of the small room that was filled with the slightly strong smell of the wild grasses.

The silence continued for a while, but Arai opened her mouth.

"Hey"

"……What is it? Hih! Auuuu……"

Sophia immediately tried to look at Aria, but the pain of her body made her screamed a bit. Because they forced herself to use the Art that she had only manifested, their body was worn out.

Aria moved her neck to look at Sophia's cringing face but—.

"Afuyah!"

Pain ran through her whole body. Sophia laughed slightly hearing that voice. Because of that her stomach muscle felt pain and she writhed again. She endured that and asked Aria.

"Uuu, wha, what is it? You have something you want to ask just now."

"Tha, that's right! You, why did you say that kind of harsh thing to Lyle? Be a little bit more considerate to him."

Sophia had also heard about Lyle’s circumstance from Novem. Sophia argued with Aria even knowing that.

"Certainly there are parts that I ought to sympathize with. But, so what about it? Acting strict will be for the sake of Lyle-dono too."

"You—tsu! Uuuu……"

Pain ran through her again when she spontaneously raised her voice. Aria waited for her cold sweat to recede somehow.

The two would be pained if they moved their body even if only slightly. Sometimes voices of "Afuu""Ah!" and the like that could even sound coquettish by mistake filled the room.

According to Novem their body was trying to change into an optimal state for the sake of using Art. There was a need to optimize the body to be dedicated for the manifested Art in order to use it, she said.

That was the first time the two heard about that.

The two of them called down their breathing once more before resuming their talk. The two of them were drenched in sweat even though they were sleeping.

Sophia said to Aria.

"……It won’t be for the good of the person to keep spoiling him forever."

"I think it’s also problematic to suddenly act harshly at him though."

In respond to Aria’s swift answer, Sophia replied "Perhaps that is so" with a small voice. But, it seemed she had no intention to alter her attitude.

She said a bit sadly.

"I don’t really understand how to be kind. At my house my grandfather was really strict, he would raise his hand right away. There was even time when I thought that was normal."

Aria recalled her own father.

(When I was little, Otou-sama was kind and never hit me wasn’t he.)

Thinking that, Aria became unable to blame Sophia. Sophia continued her talk.

"Grandfather was overprotective, or should I say he had outdated way of thinking. Because of that I spent most of my time at the mansion’s garden. Sometimes Otou-sama would take me outside, but then grandfather would yell at Otou-sama. I didn’t want to see that. When I realized, I almost never even talked with someone around my age. Grandfather kept saying it’s because I’m a daughter who would marry to other house."

Apparently not everything around her was strict. But, even then Sophia’s life was still in a strict category.

"I thought that you are strangely stiff, so it’s because of that."

When Aria said that, Sophia fell silent for a while before murmuring.

"Honestly, I’m envious with you."

"Why’s that?"

Aria felt puzzled hearing Sophia was envying her. She was the daughter of the ruined Lockwarde House. Her father cooperated with a bandit group and he was punished for it.

Aria herself too was sold as prostitute although it was only at the surface.

"……Weren't you get saved even though you were kidnapped by a bandit group? That's enviable."

When Sophia said that shyly, Aria was taken aback with a gasp, however the next moment she let out a laugh.

"Aha, ahahaha……biguuu!!"

Her stomach felt painful from laughing. Her body moved because of that pain and her whole body felt pain. While Aria screamed and writhed, Sophia who thought she was laughed at got angry.

"Wha, what is so funn—hahyaaaa!!"

The two of them waited for the pain to recede before resuming their talk. The two of them were breathing roughly.

Aria was tearful from her body's pain while,

"I, I was saved but, Lyle isn't really conscious of me, our relation isn't like what you think, you know……"

It was hard to even talk. Sophia reacted to that.

"The, the result is the same. Be, besides……you were even pro, proposed for marriage. You were approached by multiple males, that's e, enviable……ouch……"

Sophia was also shedding tear from her body's pain.

Then Aria spoke.

"It's not like I'm happy from that. It looks like Dale-san has other person he likes after all."

"Is that so?"

"That so. I think, it’s that Paola-san perhaps? Dale-san sometimes would watch her with a conflicted look on his face. Someone like me is only approached because he is aiming at my bloodline that can use magic. He is stupid. Even though something like Lockwarde’s bloodline has no more worth."

Hearing the name Lockwarde, Sophia recalled Aria’s circumstance and fell silent. And then, she apologized after a while.

"I’m sorry. I thoughtlessly spoke about envying you without considering your circumstance……"

Aria answered.

"It’s fine. Right now I can work as adventurer like this thanks to Lyle. That’s why, I wanted to thank him but……I, cannot be of any use. So, at least, I want to be kind to him."

Sophia also talked about the inside of her heart to Aria.

"Honestly, I’m always thinking that perhaps, I’m just using Lyle-dono like this. Far from repaying my debt, I am holding him back and even make him taking care of me. It’s pathetic, so if it’s like this, I thought that I should at least do what I can and can only act strictly to him……"

When the two of them understood that they thought the same thing like each other, they started laughing. However, they immediately writhed again due to the pain—.

.

I am standing still outside the hut with my hand holding a bucket filled with water.

It’s because the ancestors told me to not enter right now.

"……I wonder if it’s alright for me to enter now?"

The Second gave me permission even while feeling slightly exasperated. However, he also told me to enter after waiting for a bit more.

[Lyle, if you enter in this timing, they will think that you were listening to their talk.]

"No, I have been actually listening in fact."

Yes, their conversation could be heard until outside the hut. The conversation that was mixed with strange voices in between was talking about me.

The Fourth warned me.

[Lyle, be careful to not say something like you were listening to their talk. Do you understand?]

"……Yes."

I’m used to have people spoke ill behind my back, so it doesn’t matter even if they were talking about me. But, this time I felt this strange embarrassment.

It felt like they were treasuring me from the way they talked. Until now the retainers and servants in the mansion would spread malicious gossip behind my back in the mansion routinely. Within their talk they would always compare me to Celes, and I gradually got used even to that. No, perhaps they were intentionally doing it so I could hear. After all they were purposefully talking at the place that I was passing through.

While I was waiting, I could hear the First getting moved to tears. Perhaps this person is unexpectedly easily moved to tears.

[Aria-chan……so you are thinking about Lyle until that far.]

The Third was exasperated at the First.

[You don’t need to be crying like that because of this. More importantly Lyle……it’s great isn’t it?]

I tilted my head at that.

"What is?"

The Fifth sighed.

[It’s how you have girls around you who although awkward are good girls. I won’t tell you to marry them but, treat them with care.]

Then the First objected at the Fifth.

[No, tell him to marry them there! They are really good girls like this!]

The Sixth spoke with a troubled voice.

[No, well……but, the problem lies in Lyle. He doesn’t have the resolve, or should I say that this isn’t the stage to have that kind of talk……]

Certainly, from the eyes of the ancestors I must be someone unreliable.

Perhaps they were uneasy because of that.

"Well, I don’t know if I can make even Novem alone happy. ……Ah, it had become quiet so I’ll come in."

I entered inside the hut.

The two of them might be tired from talking or from their writhing. They were sleeping soundly.

.

Around the fourth day since we came to the village.

Aria-san and Sophia-san had recovered, so we are going to try fighting monster at the nearby forest.

However, this was Dale-san’s territory. We went to him to ask for permission to hunt but…….

"No way. The material and magic stone belong to the village. I’ll have you hand over 80% of the gain to us."

When we went to the feudal lord’s mansion and talked to Dale-san, Zappa-san who was the leader of the youth in the village came. He brushed aside Dale-san who was talking with Zelphy-san and butt in at the talk regarding the sharing of the material and magic stone.

Dale-san was also troubled.

"Zappa, they will be the one defeating the monster. It’s fine to take only half isn’t it? I think if they receive the magic stone with the material given to us……"

Zappa-san yelled.

"How can you have weak attitude like that! The soldiers of the baron were the same. Those guys, they brought back all the magic stone and material the monsters dropped. You were taken lightly because of your weak attitude like that!"

Dale-san couldn’t say anything back at Zappa-san’s words. I touched the Jewel.

Then the First talked with a displeased voice.

[Asking for half when you don’t even defeat the monster yourself, don’t screw around! That’s what I’ll tell him. I totally hate this kind of guy!]

The Second ingored the First’s grievance.

[This place is Dale’s territory. The right to decide lie in Dale. But……I’ve been thinking it since before but, he doesn’t have any decent higher-ups with him huh.]

The Fourth explained to me.

[Lyle, the higher-ups are people who are indispensable for managing a village. Look, among the villagers there are people who has surname right? Like the village mayor or peacemaker……let’s see, they are people like this Zappa who act as the leader of the village’s youths.]

The Third continued the explanation with a sleepy voice. He didn’t seem interested.

[The higher-ups of the village are the people who practically managed the village, if the higher-ups worked properly then the feudal lord will have it easy. In fact, there are higher-ups who are more capable than the feudal lord. The feudal lord who has that kind of personnel has it really easy in their work. I'm jealous.]

The Fifth spat out with a chilly tone.

[Dale is at fault for making this guy a higher-up. This talk is over with that.]

I recalled the higher-ups of this village. Paola-san and Zappa-san……they are young and unreliable. They are unreliable not because they are young, they are really unreliable that is unrelated with their age. Though it's not something that someone like me can talk about.

Zelphy-san was irritated, but she said to Dale-san.

"I understand. This is also to teach these four people here anyway. Our reward will be 20% of the whole. We ask our share to be the only the magic stones because they are easy to carry."

Dale-san looked apologetic, and then, Zappa-san made a triumphant face.

Seeing that the Second talked with a low voice. It sounded like he wasn't talking about Zappa-san, but Dale-san.

[……Idiot.]

It seemed Zappa-san was older than Dale-san, and he was like a big brother to him. Because of that, Dale-san also couldn't talk back to him. Was that the case?

This reception, could it be this also included payback to me?

I don’t know about that but, it seemed the ancestors were irritated with the way he was being considerate to Zappa-san.

.

We walked until bear the forest. We were wearing lighter equipment than usual. It was easy to move.

The forest was located a slight distance away from the village.

Near us there was also the wagon that was loaded with our baggage. We didn’t leave behind our possession in the village.

Zelphy-san carried a shield with her left hand and a sword with her right hand that she placed on her shoulder. She wore a leather armor and looked around before explaining to us.

"Listen, in the case we are going to faraway place, or using a settlement or village—fortress as base, there will be time we have to prepare camp site. In both cases, you absolutely have to manage your own luggage. In case you have to leave somewhere, you should bring your luggage with you or leave behind a guard."

Sophia-san slightly looked down.

"Well, it’s sad but people with sticky fingers can be found anywhere."

Zelphy-san nodded.

"This is for each other’s sake. In case there is theft, because adventurer’s tool is expensive. Depending on the situation a harsh punishment will be given. In order to prevent that kind of loss, so that you won’t be stolen from, manage your own luggage. Sometimes there will also be a bunch that act excessively kind and tell you to entrust your luggage to them or something, be careful toward that kind of people. Oops, they came out."

While we were talking near the forest, insect type monster came out from the bush. Its size was around 60 centimeter and it looked like moth.

It was fluttering around and drool was trickling from its mouth. It looked like it would snap at us even now.

Zelphy-san used her one-handed sword not to cut it but to knock it down. The sword’s flat side made *bashi-!* sound.

It was like she was just striking a fly.

"See. It’s effective to hit it down like this. It’s better than stabbing it and causing the fluid to scatter everywhere. Besides, when it come in big number it will be troublesome if you have to pull out your weapon every time after stabbing it."

Zelphy-san skillfully wore her gloves and plucked off the wings from the monster as material, and took out a red magic stone from inside the body.

"Next……I don’t think you will do it but, absolutely don’t use fire or lightning element magic inside forest. Sometimes there would be idiot who tried to burn monster along with the forest. The monsters living inside the forest will run away to the surrounding, turning it into a disaster."

If the forest burned, the monsters living there would rush to the surrounding and caused damage. It seemed the number of monster lurking in a place like forest was relatively many.

It seemed sometimes there would also atrocious monster among them and it would go around destroying the surrounding village. Novem looked around and she seemed to notice something.

"Come to think of it, there is no elf in this forest. The forest is growing abundantly and is hard to enter."

Elf—even among the demi-human they had beautiful appearance. They were famous as demi-human race that didn’t have permanent settlement. Elf was divided largely into two categories. Hunting race elf that lived traveling inside forest, and traveling performer elf that traveled to every place.

Both types were living without settling down in one place fitting for elf. The type that wasn’t living in forest could be seen often in normal life, they were strongly perceived as performer who displayed song and dance.

Zelphy-san finished taking the magic stone and material while speaking.

"The number of monster will be extremely few if there are elves living here, and the forest will feel more managed. Well, it will also be really troublesome if there are elves here though."

Aria tilted her head.

"But, demi-human fundamentally is friendly toward human right……no, isn’t it? Is there any problem with them?"

Aria-san altered her tone to be more polite toward Zelphy-san who was in working mode.

"……There is no problem with the performer elf but, a lot of the elf inside the forest are hot blooded. Well, they will be friendly if you don’t do anything strange, so it’s alright. But you see……they will try to ask various things about the outside situation, so if they caught you, it will be really hard to get away from them."

Novem chuckled.

"Elf love song and tale after all. I heard that the elves inside the forest are starving for that kind of topic."

Sophia-san muttered.

"……They feel troublesome somehow."

Zelphy-san nodded while taking off her gloves.

"They’re troublesome. They also have stamina, and the inside of the forest is the elf’s garden so you won’t be able to escape. If they thought that you have interesting story, you will be confined for a few days. Well, they will judge the person so they won’t approach dangerous people."

We listened to the unexpected story about elf while entering the forest.

Aria-san and Sophia-san immediately moved forward.

"Leave this to me. I was no good until now but, I have manifested my Art so I’ll show my usefulness from now!"

"I finally can repay my debt. ……I’m going!"

The two charged into the forest.

Novem called out to their back, but they didn’t seem to listen.

"Err, we should move as group……they are gone."

A vein appeared on Zelphy-san’s forehead.

"I’ll give them a punch when I bring them back."

In the end we went to search for the two. Aria-san used her Art inside the forest and she was dangling from a branch swayingly. She was fainting from getting hit on the head. Sophia-san was struggling to pull out her battle axe that hit deeply into a tree.

The evaluation that the Second gave the two of them was,

[……Idiot.]

That.

.

We collected the two and got out of the forest.

Leaving aside the two who were scolded by Zelphy-san, I entered the forest alone.

Novem was standing by outside the forest. My role is to lure out monster.

The tactic was for me to gather monster, and when coming outside Novem would blow them all in one go with magic.

I walked inside the forest swinging the hatchet I prepared. The blade was square at the tip. The handle was a bit curved. It was easy to handle to brush away the obstructing branch and grass while advancing rather than using dagger.

Then, the Second seemed happy.

[How is it, Lyle! The hatchet is easy to use right?]

"Yeah. I think it’s better than dagger for this kind of situation."

Certainly, it was easier to use than dagger if it was for advancing through this kind of place.

I advanced while confirming the surrounding terrain with the Fifth’s Art, Map, and searched the enemy’s location using the Sixth’s Art, Search.

When I found enemy reaction like that, I listened to the Second’s instruction.

[Don’t make any sound. Can you see the enemy?]

I slowly moved toward the enemy's direction. I checked the ground under me while advancing without making any sound as much as possible. I arrived until the position where I could see the enemy with naked eye.

Over there, was a rabbit that was as big as a medium-sized dog. No, rather than rabbit……there was various ways to call it. It was a monster that was called killer rabbit, one horned rabbit, or horn rabbit.

A distinctive cone shaped horn grew from its forehead. Its red eyes were sharp and looked aggressive. It was eating grass, but its front tooth was sharp and the other teeth also looked like carnivore.

The monster had white fur and looked fluffy. It would attack if human approached, but it was said that it would be alright if they weren't approached.

When I switched from hatchet to saber, the Second raised a surprised voice [Eh!?], but I ignored him and approached. He must be surprised that I didn't use the hatchet.

Then, the Fifth spoke in a bit of panic.

[O, oi. This guy really isn't a problem if you don't approach him. Le, let's just overlook it.]

Then the Sixth spoke to the Fifth in exasperation.

[Fifth……you still have that sickness.]

[Don't call it sickness! Look at how pitiful it is!]

Calling a monster pitiful……. I never even imagined that the Fifth would say something like that. Normally he was composed and didn't talk much. The Fifth felt the most lacking in human kindness for me.

Then the ancestors from the First until even the Third were enraged.

[PITIFUL YOU SAYYYY!? There is nothing but hatred welled up inside when I see these things! I want to crush it into pieces right in this instant!]

[It’s irritating when I see that fur. I want to shoot it with arrow right at this instant and skin it.]

[It’s Walt House’s style to kill it the instant you discover them. Search and destroy!]

Even the Third who was usually carefree sounded seriously angry.

Perhaps noticing the uproar inside the Jewel—the monster sensed me.

"It noticed!? Don’t tell me the voice inside is—"

I thought that it could hear the conversation inside the Jewel, but the First gave me advice.

[Lyle, these things are beast. He smelled you. Pay attention to the wind’s direction. Look, it’s coming at you!]

The First sounded like he was having fun.

The horned rabbit moved toward me in a straight line. It was going to stab me with the horn on its forehead. It was heading toward me and took a deep forward step to leap toward me—.

[Now. Move to the side and cut it with your saber!]

I dodged to the left just as the First said. The jumping horned rabbit lost its target while it was in midair. The moment it passed by me, I cut it with saber and blood scattered to the surrounding. The trees and green leaves were dyed red.

That color was displayed vividly among the forest's greenery. The scent of the tree was overwritten by the smell of blood.

When the horned rabbit fell on the ground and rolled over,

[NOOOOOO!!]

The Fifth's scream came from inside the Jewel.

"Please wait. Don't yell seriously like that……it decrease my mana."

It will be dangerous if I collapse inside the forest. When I asked the Fifth to be quiet, I could hear the voices of three people rejoicing.

[Fuh, the annoying monster that devastated the farm has vanished.]

[How refreshing.]

[It's the enemy of farm after all. These guys, even though they don't really need to eat, it ravaged the farm greatly. Besides……]

The Third didn't continue his sentence. The Fifth objected.

[There is no need to kill it! It's fine as long as you don't approach it!]

[Fifth, please be quiet already.]

The Sixth admonished the Fifth which was unusual. Even so, why is the Fifth covering up for monster until this far?

"What's up with the Fifth? Or rather, you didn't say anything when I defeated other monster."

The Sixth spoke with a fed-up voice.

[It's that. The Fifth love animal. Especially the fluffy and cute one.]

That’s unexpected. Even though he looked like a person that wasn’t interested in anything.

The Fifth unusually objected emotionally.

[Is it wrong? Are you saying it’s wrong!?]

The Sixth laughed.

[It’s obviously wrong. After all it’s mistaken to love your pet more than your own children.]

"……Eh? What does that mean?"

Both the Fifth and the Sixth fell silent looking like they didn’t want to talk. It seemed that even the Sixth who was usually idolizing the Fifth was holding some kind of parent and child problem.

The Second talked apathetically.

[It became a source of growth for Lyle. It’s good like that. Look, the next one came, the next.]

The growth became faster by defeating monster. I was trying to put it into practice, but there wasn’t any sign at all that my growth would come.

When I approached the horned rabbit, the First taught me the way to process it.

[First drain its blood.]

"In this place?"

[When other monster gathered to the smell of blood, you can just take along the corpse with you and go outside. Come on, do it swiftly.]

Previously I couldn’t do something like this, but I got used to it since becoming adventurer and did various things. Because the meat of horned rabbit can be eaten, it’s treated as material. It mustn’t get dirtied, so I stabbed my saber to the ground and took out a clean knife. Like that I began draining its blood.

When I checked the movement of the surrounding enemy using Art, certainly they were moving toward the scent of blood.

"I’ll go outside like this."

I carried the horned rabbit with one hand while storing the saber into its sheath. I took out the hatchet and began moving. I adjusted the distance so that the enemy would converge on me while aiming to go outside the forest.

While running inside the forest, my feet got caught in quagmire several times.

When I got out from inside the gloomy forest to the bright outside, Novem who was on standby readied her heirloom staff and began preparing her magic.

I yelled at Novem. The figure of Aria-san and Sophia-san who were made to kneel on the ground entered my sight.

"There are seven! They are moving fast. Burn them all at once!"

Fire element magic couldn’t be used inside the forest. But, we are outside. Besides, magic control was simple for Novem. It was easy for her to make it so the forest wouldn’t catch fire.

Novem lifted her staff and chanted.

"……Fire Storm."

When I passed beside Novem, the swarm of moth coming out from the forest aimed at Novem. And then, wind was whirling with the seven moths at the center and flame manifested.

The seven monsters were neatly caught inside the storm of flame. The storm became a fire pillar and they burned.

The surrounding temperature increased drastically. I threw the hatchet to the ground and covered my face with my right hand. It seemed there was no monster escaping to outside the magic range.

"As expected."

Novem lightly bowed at my praise.

"Lyle-sama too, good work."

Zelphy-san approached us while applauding.

"Splendid. The material is burned but no problem. It’s not our business after all. Look, both of you collect the magic stone from the monster cinders!"

The two who were made to kneel stood up. It seemed their legs were paralyzed, they were using their spear and battle axe as cane and walked to collect the magic stone.

"……Even though I did my best."

"How vexing."

Well, it’s good that they did their best but, it’s troubling that they suddenly entered the forest, used their Art, and became unable to move. I showed the horned rabbit I collected to Zelphy-san.

"Ah, I defeated this midway."

"The blood draining……is finished eh. Got it. Let’s have those two dismantle it."

Aria-san and Sophia-san twitched and their shoulders trembled. The two of them usually only faced slime. This would be their first time skinning a horned rabbit.

As expected they still had reluctance to dismantle a monster this big.

Novem put her hand on her mouth—.

"Well, this punishment is just right for them."

—And said that.

The Second sighed while looking at the two who were tearfully reluctant to dismantle materials from the horned rabbit and said.

[……These idiots.]

The First was defending only Aria-san.

[Stu, stupid idiot! Aren’t that cute! The teary Aria-chan is cute! But, is it alright for her to rapidly become able to do anything like this? Now I become worried in a different sense though? It’s also no good if she become too sturdy. Even though right now she is cute.]

When I imagined Aria-san who had become sturdy, for some reason I could easily picture it in my mind.

However, I completely cannot say it to the person herself who is currently dismantling the horned rabbit tearfully, so I decided to keep it a secret.

Chapter 25 – Truth

The evening of the fourth day.

Zappa-san who was attending at the delivery of the material looked at the amount of the magic stone and material and his voice became rough.

"The, the number doesn't match!"

Zelphie-san grinned while shrugging. If 80% was going to be taken anyway, there was no need to try too hard to earn more. There was no need to work hard to collect material.

"No, most got burned. It became irrecoverable. That's why there is only this much. Now then, our share will be 20% from this. Oops, if you are suspecting us then you can take a look at the cinders near the forest."

The Third laughed at Zappa-san.

[It become like this because you tried to take 80%. Even though if you only ask 50, 40% then they will treat the material carefully. It become like this because you got too greedy.]

Well, the cause of this was also because we didn't think of defeating monster to earn money.

Zappa-san's expectation was greatly off.

"Don't screw around. Then all the magic stones are ours!"

"Hee, you are saying that. Then, you'll have to properly sell those magic stones to the guild, or I'll tell the guild to confirm it to here. The guild will overlook it if it's just a little amount but……there is this many. The guild might not be staying quiet."

Zelphy-san looked at the magic stone’s number while threatening Zappa-san with a smile.

"Yo, you bitch."

Zappa-san looked vexed. Dale-san put a stop to him.

"It’s enough, Zappa. We will hand over the 20%. Also we will take the materials."

While we were carrying out the delivery, Paola-san came running. We couldn’t see her clearly because it was evening, but we noticed her pale face when she got near.

"Dale-sama! Zappa! An envoy from Maini House came!"

Dale-san and Zappa-san rushed out after looking at Paola-san’s complexion. We also followed them to the entrance of the village where five armed retainers of Maini House were waiting angrily.

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We headed to the mansion along with the five envoys and listened to the situation.

Then, what came out from the envoy’s mouth was—.

"We found a trace of battle in the forest at our territory’s side."

They discovered the place that seemed to be where the start of the problem, the death of Maini House’s retainer happened. Furthermore there was a trace of battle and there were also a lot of bloods shed there. In addition they discovered a part of the retainer’s armor and his personal effects hidden in the bush and tree.

Furthermore, the location was inside the forest—at the other side of the river that was the territory of Maini House.

"……Hand over the people who discovered the corpse. It’s necessary to thoroughly question them about the detail."

Zappa-san fell silent. He was sweating on his forehead. It was unusual because normally he would keep butting in. Then Dale-san spoke.

"Please wait. The way you said it feels like you are suspecting us!"

The envoy glared at Dale-san and emitted an air as though he would cut him down even now.

"You’re right, we are suspecting you. Depending on the situation we will make you give us various compensations. How about we explain the situation to our respective superior, we will talk to our lord the viscount-sama, while you can talk to your caregiver the baron-sama, eh."

Dale-san looked down hearing about compensation mentioned.

"……How much will it be?"

The envoy started with "The definite value haven’t been decided but" and said,

"You will have to compensate us a thousand gold coins."

I’m surprised at the amount that surpassed my imagination. The Sixth explained to me calmly.

[Don’t be surprised Lyle. At this situation they will exaggerate the amount at first. From there both sides will grope around for the compromising amount of each side. Even the other side doesn’t think that this kind of village will have that much money.]

Dale-san raised his head.

"There is no way we have that much money!"

The envoy kept looking coldly at Dale-san.

"So what? If it was the deed of bandit, they would have no reason to intentionally carry the heavy corpse. Besides, if they did that they would make it so the corpse wouldn’t be found wouldn’t it? Someone of Bagan House found the corpse……how suspicious. It’s as though your side is going to try to press us to pay compensation. I can’t help but think so."

"There is no way we will do something like that!"

Dale-san was agitated, while beside him Paola-san could only look flustered.

The Third spoke carefreely.

[The turn of affairs became suspicious isn’t it? If it like this could it be, this is a sign that our stay here would be prolonged?]

The ancestors didn’t want to get involved no matter what. Certainly, it might not be good even if outsider like me interjected here.

I suddenly felt a presence and moved my gaze to outside. Outside the window, there was a male with small build peering into the mansion. I had seen him somewhere—it was when I thought that. I recalled the time when I went to buy saber at Dalien.

At that time, there was a youth with small build conversing with the female shopkeeper.

The Second also seemed to recall it.

[Is it that guy from that time, the one requesting to repair an armor? That’s suspicious……Lyle, catch him. It will be a loss if we got held up for a while at this kind of place. Catch and hand him over.]

I told Zelphy-san who was watching the conversation of Dale-san and the envoy that I would go outside and exited the mansion. I met up with Novem and the other two who were waiting outside and apprehended the youth peering into the mansion.

.

Inside the hut where we are staying.

The name of the small and plump youth who we tied up is Pini. His expression seemed gentle and he had short and curly brown hair. I was the only male among the people surrounding him, but he was trembling.

Novem asked me.

"Lyle-sama, you said that this person is involved with the case this time?"

"Yes. Actually I had met him some time ago at the blacksmith in Dalien. He wanted an armor repaired there and requested the shopkeeper. But, the name that was engraved on the armor wasn’t this person’s name."

Sophia-san turned her gaze at Pini-san’s face. Because she had sharp gaze, Pini-san thought he was being glared at and felt scared.

"I, I’m sorry! Bu, but, at that time I had no choice but to do that!"

Sophia-san asked with a low voice.

"What do you mean by that time? Depending on what you’ve done……"

Aria-san stopped Sophia-san.

"Wait! You don’t have that kind of authority."

"I know. But, this person is involved with the case this time. We cannot just leave him alone!"

"Both of you, please calm down."

Novem calmed down the two arguing people. The First was irritated inside the Jewel.

[Beat him up until he confess!]

But the Third was different.

[No, that's no good. Because this young man is Dale-san's people. Now then……let's hear the story from him. It won't be amusing if we got tied down too long in this place, if this guy is the culprit then hand him over and let the two sides talked it out later.]

The Fourth's tone became delighted when it come to matter of money.

[Surely we'll be able to earn money from the viscount as mediation fee. How envious. After all it looks like the fault lies completely at this side.]

I lowered my face until the height of Pini-san's eyes, and then I questioned him.

"It won't be good for yourself if you lie. Just what in the world did you do at Dalien? Or rather, why didn't we catch any sight of you since we arrived here?"

Pini-san's gaze wandered around while he began to explain the situation.

"Za, Zappa told me some time ago……aa, Zappa is like the leader of the young men here……"

"We know him. What did he tell you to do?"

"……He told me to go to Dalien to buy weapon."

Hearing the word weapon, both Aria-san and Sophia-san became unable to look calm.

Especially Sophia-san, she talked with a serious voice.

"What are you planning to do after obtaining weapon!? Don't tell me, you aren't planning to fight aren't you……"

The Second's voice came from the Jewel.

[They will lose right away. There is the difference in number, but they also lose in quality. Lyle, make him continue talking.]

I asked Sophia-san to stay quiet and asked the circumstance to Pini-san.

"When I arrived in the city, I heard the rumor that our village got into dispute……but, I heard that it was only adventurers who were dispatched……it's different from Zappa's plan……"

Zappa's plan?

"What kind of plan is that?"

"……Zappa, he want to become knight."

"Knight?"

Hearing that the First said,

[For something like that, if you go to battlefield and raise achievement—]

The Third cut off the First's remark.

[First, few people can do something like that. I see now, he wanted to cause a war. He prepared weapon for that.]

Zappa-san tried to cause a war, raise achievements, and become knight. Is such thing possible?

Then Sophia-san muttered.

"He want to become vassal knight? Don’t tell me, he is going to cause war just for that?"

Pini-san nodded several times.

"Tha, that’s right. Zappa said that if he can become knight he will be able to live comfortably. Also, he said that he doesn’t want doing farm work his whole life."

The Third who heard that snorted.

[He should try being in my position. Good grief, this is why youngster with unrealistic dream is troublesome.]

The Third died in battlefield. Because of that, he was irritated at Zappa-san who was thinking to obtain success in life by raising achievements in battlefield.

Sophia-san made a disbelieving face.

"Wha, what foolishness! How many people he thought will die if a war happen! And that’s not all. He don’t know how great the damage to this village will be!"

It was Sophia-san who was knowledgeable about a situation like this. I listened carefully to Sophia-san’s talk and asked what was in my mind.

"What will happen if war really occur?"

Sophia-san pressed her forehead with her hand. She was utterly amazed by the extremely foolish reason of this situation.

"……Maini House will request reinforcement to the viscount-sama, and Bagan House will also ask the same to the baron-sama. It will be difficult to gather the number at this period of time but, perhaps each side will have two or three hundreds I think? Naturally Maini House will fight seriously, so the number of that side will definitely be higher. There is no way this side will be able to hold out until reinforcement arrive, so this village will become a target of pillaging."

Pini-san was drenched in sweat.

"Bu, but, in battlefield they have to make declaration of war first and decide the time……"

Sophia-san yelled angrily.

"It won't be that kind of easygoing battle! The other side has one of their retainers killed! There is no way they will give any extension of time."

Would it really become something that tragic? When I looked at Aria-san, she seemed to be uninformed too in this area and shook her head. Novem looked at Pini-san while,

"There are also cases where the date and time are decided first. Well, if speaking about war in detail there is also several types of it."

Sophia-san nodded.

"This won't be a battle to show their strength to each other. Depending on what you say after this there is a possibility that a lot of blood will be shed for real. Medard-sama isn't the type of person who will go easy on his enemy."

Pini-san was trembling fiercely.

I got a question.

"Eh, but both sides are fellow people of Bahnseim Kingdom right? They will go that far?"

Sophia-san looked at me in exasperation.

The First yelled angrily at me.

[Obviously! Even I if I got something like this done to me then I'll fight for real!]

The Second was also of the same opinion.

[You cannot do something like holding back anyway. Lyle, I'll say this, if my ally got killed and then his corpse received that kind of treatment, I'll fight seriously. After all if I don't do anything then the people will feel dissatisfied.]

The Third was disgruntled.

[This is really troublesome. We won't be able to run away if war really does happen, want to join up with Maini House from now?]

Was something like that allowed?

Pini-san was crying.

"I, I never thought it would become like that……"

Sophia-san yelled.

"Just what in the world did you all do! Speak out everything!"

Pini-san started explaining the situation.

.

—It was the happening of several weeks ago.

Zappa and Pini entered the forest. The two were carrying club as weapon and defeated monster, collecting the magic stone and material to be sold to peddler.

The price would be beaten down compared to selling them directly to guild, but it would be troublesome to go to Dalien that was far away to sell by themselves.

"Zappa, let’s stop already. We just crossed the river."

"Shut up, Pini. I want to earn as much money as possible before the peddler comes next time. I’ll buy weapon with that money. I think Paola will think better of me then."

It wasn’t just Zappa who was in love with Paola who was the daughter of a higher-up. Speaking about the girl who was yearned among the men of the same generation, it would be Paola.

Pini was also harboring a fleeting feeling of love toward her, because of that he studied how to read and count. However, he didn’t know whether he was able to make her look at him with that. There was a rumor that Zappa who was the same age with him and was the leader of the pack when they were kids would marry Paola someday.

"But, we didn’t even ask Dale-sama for permission, it’s bad to do something like this secretly."

"I’m the captain of the youth group! It’ll be fine if it’s me!"

The two entered the territory of Maini House and searched for monster inside the forest. Sometimes they would also take edible wild plants and fruits and put them inside a basket.

It was a splendid crime.

(Zappa, recently he became even worse. He is running wild since Paola’s father, the feudal lord and also Dale’s big brother died.)

The people who would scold him were suddenly gone. In addition, the person who became the new feudal lord was Dale who he got along well since a long time ago. Because of such circumstance, Zappa’s influence in the village was increasing. The cause was because Dale was soft toward Zappa.

While they were walking inside the forest of Maini House like that, a voice came. It was an angry voice.

"What are you doing there!?"

Over there was an armored person carrying a great sword on his back. The two immediately understood that he was a retainer of Maini House because his attire was well-ordered.

"Thi, this is bad!"

"Zappa, let’s apologize quickly!"

"I, I told this guy that we mustn’t but, this guy said that he want to take edible plants for his mother no matter what."

Zappa laid the blame on Pini when he advised him to apologize.

"Zappa!"

The retainer of Maini House who was carrying a hatchet in order to walk inside the forest approached the two.

"You two, you are people of Bagan House. You recognize that you crossed the river and entered our territory then? In that case, put down your luggage and get lost right away."

The other party said that he would forgive them if they left the things they harvested. But Zappa doggedly argued.

"O, oi. Wait. Half. No, most of this came from the territory of Bagan House. We will return what we took from here so the rest"

"You think I can trust you? This is why people of Bagan House is……"

At that time a roar came from inside the forest.

Zappa and Pini were shocked by that voice and lost the strength in their legs.

The retainer of Maini House pulled out the great sword on his back.

"Orc? Why is it in this kind of place—"

A pig faced monster with two fangs jutting out from its lower jaw was approaching. Its height was around two meter.

Hair was also growing from its large arm, and cloth was tied around its waist. It brushed aside the trees with its large hand and the thin trees collapsed with cracking sound.

The orc’s right hand was holding a stone axe.

When it arrived near them, it raised a growl like an animal and glared at the retainer of Maini House.

"You two, run away from here at once. My comrades are nearby, call them here!"

The retainer slashed at the orc with his great sword. The orc deflected it with its axe.

Their power was different, on top of that it was hard to fight with great sword in this place.

"Shit-!"

If the retainer of Maini House was allowed to make excuse, surely he would say that he never thought there would be an orc inside the forest. Because of that, he carried great sword here only for the sake of bringing it. If he had a hatchet he could deal with the monster of this area easy enough.

However, there was no way to fight orc with a hatchet. Thick skin and bulky limbs. The retainer switched to great sword because he thought it would be better to fight such orc with great sword.

Pini immediately ran away.

But, Zappa grabbed at Pini’s trouser.

Pini fell down.

"Zappa!"

"M, my foot won’t move! It’s the same like that time……"

He meant of the time of their first campaign. The war three years ago where Rodornia House was the main participant. The feudal lord and important people of their village joined the battle.

With how small the war potential of Bagan House was, they were positioned at the rear. They were given the role to guard the food supply. But, Zappa was dissatisfied with that and rushed out.

The feudal lord, the eldest son, and Paola’s father the higher-up chased after Zappa, while Pini went to tell the other units the reason why their force moved on their own accord. And then when the three caught up to Zappa—.

There was enemy ambush. Zappa became unable to stand up from fear and the three people died in order to protect him. After that because Pini came bringing ally as reinforcement, it ended with only Zappa getting saved. Looking at the result, Zappa was able to lure out

enemy ambush, but he was the cause of the great loss where their village lost its feudal lord, eldest son, and a higher-up.

"Le, let go! I've to tell the others about this right away!"

"You said that but you just want to run away! Do, don't leave me behind!"

Zappa wouldn't let go.

The retainer of Maini House who heard that arguing lost focus. He also let his guard down from his success of slashing deeply into the orc's right arm.

"What are you doing, quickly—"

The next instant, the orc switched holding the stone axe to his left hand and cut down the retainer.

Pini and Zappa watched with their mouth opening and closing. They were convinced they were going to die.

However, the orc looked at the blood flowing from his right arm. And then, it looked at the falling great sword and threw away its stone axe before picking the sword up. It acted vigilantly toward Pini and Zappa while looking at the great sword……and then, it took away the sword.

Pini was relieved and he immediately moved to warn the people of Maini House. But, Zappa wouldn't let go.

"Zappa, enough with the—"

"Pini……we're moving that man's body."

"—Eh?"

Zappa said that they would make it looked like the retainer of Maini House died in Bagan House’s territory—.

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Inside the hut.

We who heard everything were astonished at the haphazardness of these two.

"After that the matter turned into something big, and I got scared……but, Zappa said that this is a chance. He wanted to make it look like Maini House is in the bad, ask the baron to send soldiers, and cause war."

I confirmed to Pini-san.

"That’s, really haphazard. Besides, why didn’t you stop him?"

Pini-san was shedding tears.

"I cannot win against Zappa! Besides, since the past he would punch me if I go against him……"

I thought that it was pathetic while seeing myself overlapping with Pini-san’s figure. Do I also look like this in the eyes of the ancestors?

"Actually the corpse should be hidden at a place that people won’t come to so it won’t be discovered. But, it’s impossible to carry a corpse with only the two of us inside the dangerous forest. That was why, we desperately moved the corpse until Bagan House’s territory, stripped off the valuables and brought them back. Zappa wanted to make it look like we discovered the corpse before someone else found it……he wanted to bury the corpse while no one know who it was."

The irritated voice of the Second came from inside the Jewel.

[That shitty brat called Zappa is the type I hate the most. A guy who does uncalled things and cause troubles, who got a loud voice and strong only against weaker guy. He is the epitome of a guy who does nothing except complaining.]

I think the Second……has a lot of type that he disliked. The Third sighed.

[Well, you can find guys doing stupid things anywhere. Now then, what to do about this problem……yosh, let's hand over that Zappa kid and then go home.]

Ah, so it became that conclusion as expected.

Then Aria-san talked while looking flustered.

"Wa, wait! This, it will be a disaster if we don't do something……"

Novem put her hand on her cheek and tilted her head slightly.

"This is really troubling. But, I don't think that we can do anything. In the first place, Bagan House is completely in the wrong here. Perhaps, even their caregiver will abandon them in this case."

There was no way to defend them.

The Fourth told me.

[……Lyle, ask him about the armor repair and about the mysterious letter.]

I looked at Pini-san.

"Say, could it be it was Pini-san who sent the letter to Maini House? Also, you tried to repair the armor……"

Pini-san was still crying.

"I, it was me. I was told to sell it and went to Dalien but, I couldn't do it……besides, it would be horrible if that person is buried without anyone knowing anything about him like that even though he had saved us. I asked for the repair of the armor. At the very least I want to return it to his family……"

I recalled the female shopkeeper's words. At that time she told me that the gash looked like the work of monster. In other words, the story about the monster—orc might be true.

Sophia-san folded her arms.

"……If you speak the truth, there is a possibility that this can still be ended peacefully. Besides, that orc cannot be left alone. There must be a reason why it is in this kind of place……"

Then, the Third seemed to notice something and raised his voice.

[I see!]

The Second too suddenly showed motivation.

[That's possible! That's right. This place is different from our place. There are villages around and monsters should be defeated periodically. It's strange that there would be orc here! From the flow of the story just now, it's strange that it's here!]

The First couldn't understand.

[It's just orc right? Is it strange for it to be here? After all at my era there were brown bears all over the place.]

Brown bear……a monster in the form of bear. It was considered as a monster that was even more troublesome than something like orc. Orc was also troublesome with how it used weapon. But, brown bear was plainly strong.

From the First's view, orc wasn't even dangerous.

The Fourth spoke in delight.

[Yes, this is great. It's great. If our thinking is right……it will be really profitable! Not that. It will become great experience for Lyle!]

The Fifth seemed to notice too,

[Aah, I see. Certainly if it's like that then it might be better to interfere.]

The Sixth also sounded like he was having fun.

[Hohou, in other words there is possibility in this place you say?]

The Seventh too changed his attitude until now and showed interest.

[Hmm, let's interfere here and make them indebted to us. Monster that's usually not here. Furthermore even though monster subjugation is carried out periodically, it suddenly appeared……how nice. The possibility is high.]

The Third was also speaking with excited voice.

[Haha, now it become interesting. Lyle, we'll help out a bit so let's solve the case this time.]

……Why are they suddenly showing motivation like this?

Chapter 26 – Joint Investigative Team

We undid Pini-san's restrain and returned to the mansion with us four surrounding him.

The envoys of Maini House left the mansion.

They said that there is no way they can sleep in the enemy camp and rushed out of the village even though it was night. The surrounding was dark, right now they must be camping out somewhere.

Inside the mansion Dale-san was sitting on the sofa and held his head with both his hands.

Paola-san and Zappa-san drew close to Dale-san and talked.

"Dale, we also have to do our own investigation properly."

Paola-san's tone returned to her intimate tone. However, Zappa-san was desperately trying to stop any investigation.

"Those guys were lying! Dale, believe me. Send letter to the baron right away and declare war to enemy. Specify the time and place. Then send Pini to give the letter. Pini is also buying the weapon right now, if we armed ourselves with that—"

Pini-san twitched and shook when his name was mentioned. It seemed that after hearing Sophia-san's story, he understood just how dangerous it was.

I looked at Zappa-san and thought.

How could he act so haphazardly like this?

The First spoke his conclusion about Pini-san in exasperation.

[If it’s me I’ll beat up this guy when he sent out that kind of bullshit letter. I’ll gather up all the men and gang him up.]

I could imagine the First leading the savage tribe and swung around a great sword.

The Second was in irritation. Not toward Zappa-san, but to Dale-san.

[……Misunderstanding bastard and this kind of idiot are everywhere. But, it’s this Dale’s responsibility for holding that guy in high regard. This guy is really the worst.]

The Third covered up for Dale-san somewhat.

[It can’t be helped right? Deciding the station of someone because of their relationship or as compromise happens sometimes. Honestly, he is just a decoration feudal lord isn’t he? My impression is that the villager’s ideal is pushed on him. Even though it would be good for him if he had more reliable higher-ups around him.]

The Third said that the current Dale-san was just a decoration. A feudal lord who got the ideal of his people pushed on him……I don’t know whether that’s a good or bad thing. But, at the present condition it is heading toward a really bad direction.

The Fourth easily said.

[Well, it doesn’t matter what kind of governing a feudal lord carried out, but when the situation is cornered into a checkmate like this, it’s the responsibility of the feudal lord. After all even if it’s the fault of his surrounding, it’s the feudal lord who has to take responsibility. My condolences.]

Certainly when thinking that this matter couldn’t be prevented before it happened, it might be Dale-san’s responsibility. He trusted Zappa-san too much.

Novem looked around inside the mansion. It seemed there is something slightly bothering her. She took slight distance away from Dale-san and others who prioritized their own talk rather than us who returned here, and talked to me with a small voice.

"This mansion, it is cleaned, but not that thoroughly."

Then Aria-san looked at Novem and her face turned stiff.

"Somehow, that sounds like what a scary mother-in-law would say."

Sophia-san explained to Aria-san who said Novem was like mother-in-law.

"Certainly that's so but, it's a matter that is just that important. Depending on the people they might look down on the master of this mansion after all."

Novem continued Sophia-san's words.

"I heard that the servants here were dismissed. He must be reluctant to live like a noble. Besides, I also heard that the tax was greatly reduced……perhaps he couldn't hire help because of little income."

Pini-san looked down.

"That's right. Also, the fund for doing maintenance to the village isn't enough, so right now many places are being neglected. The number of people complaining that the maintenance before this was more proper is also increasing……"

The Fifth spoke with a low voice. He was angry, perhaps he was still dejected by the matter of horned rabbit today.

[……People will still complain no matter what he do though.]

The Fourth explained to me.

[Lyle, fundamentally the feudal lord can use the gathered tax freely. They can, but! ……The maintenance expense of the village is taken from there. Various things will need to be repaired. Furthermore money to expand the farm, maintenance the road, and so on will be taken out from there too. If the tax is reduced, naturally the fund for all those things will also decrease. Balance is important in everything.]

The Third laughed.

[Well, there is also feudal lord that don’t do such thing and keep all the money in his pocket, and only forcefully make his people work though! Now then……how about we open the eyes of this dumbass.]

The tone of the Third was calm at the latter half. It was slightly scary.

I called out to Dale-san.

"Dale-san, we heard everything about the circumstance from Pini-san. Apparently the killer was a monster."

Dale-san looked at us and made a face that said he knows that already. On the other hand Zappa-san looked slightly flustered. He is glaring at Pini-san, but Sophia-san stood in between to block that gaze.

Pini-san clenched his fist and yelled while looking down.

"Certainly it was a monster that killed the retainer of Maini House! It was an orc! A monster that we had never seen until now! Bu, but……"

Zappa-san tried to grab at Pini-san, but I held him down. Even so Zappa-san tried to push me aside, so I tripped him down. Zappa-san yelled at Pini-san even while falling.

"Pini, stop!"

"……It was us who stripped down the armor and valuables before carrying the corpse to the territory of Bagan House. Me and Zappa!"

Dale-san and Paola-san were dumbfounded hearing Pini-san's yell. Dale-san stood up from the sofa and stared at Zappa-san.

"……What does that mean, Zappa."

"N, no! It's not me! It was Pini who suggested that! I stopped him but, this guy—"

Zelphy-san who is inside the room looked at me and frowned. Her expression seemed to say that I'm doing something unnecessary. I'm also feeling bad but, the ancestors are showing motivation. Surely they will become noisy if I don't interfere with this case.

"……Apparently they were preparing for war. They planned to sell the armor and valuables and buy weapons for themselves, right?"

Zappa-san who was on the ground glared at me.

"Outsider like you don't have any right to complain at what we're doing! Dale, who do you believe, this kind of bastard or me!? We have been together all this time in this village ain't we!?"

Paola-san was looking at Pini-san. And then she spoke to the astonished Dale-san.

"……Dale, Pini isn't lying. Besides, he is always pushed around by Zappa, there is no way he would tell Zappa to do such thing."

Paola-san finished speaking in one breath and looked down. She looked at Zappa-san and grimaced.

"Dale, let’s apologize. We are in the wrong."

Dale-san also crestfallenly hung his head down. He pressed his face with his left hand while squeezing out his voice with trembling lips.

"……I’ll go to Maini House the first thing tomorrow morning. I don’t know if they will forgive us if I apologize but, I’ll do everything I can so that no one will be harmed no matter what."

It seemed he was thinking about his people until the end. I honestly respected him, but apparently such thing was inconsequential from the view of the ancestors.

The Sixth spoke while looking at the tragic look of Dale-san.

[Now then, we have told him the situation so let’s move to the next step, Lyle. We have poke our nose into this kind of troublesome situation of another house. We’ve gotta receive the proper reward!]

The Sixth was enjoying this. The Seventh was indifferent.

[War won’t happen if it can be forgiven just by apologizing.]

I explained the current situation to Dale-san just like what the ancestors arranged with me.

"The problem won’t be settled with just your apology. The other side might be thinking that it’s also Bagan House that killed their retainer. Will you pay the compensation obediently, or will you get attacked and pillaged……even your caregiver baron Ventra might also give up on you if he know this and won’t send reinforcement here."

In reality I don’t know at all how the situation will develop from now. I am simply fanning up his anxiety.

Dale-san’s face turned pale.

"Bu, but, it was a monster that killed—"

"They might say that your people intentionally led the monster there. After all the other side is really pissed off right now, whether they will listen to your explanation or not……"

I lifted my right hand in front of the anxious surrounding. I narrated the unpleasant future while also making gestures.

"The reparation money is a thousand gold coin is it? In case you are paying it, where is it possible to borrow that much money? Ah, it’s impossible I guess. Dale-san, you don’t associate with the other feudal lords. You won’t be able to borrow money from them. In that case, you will have to pay in installments. Surely you will be charged with interest then. . In order to pay that, you will have to raise the tax of this village no matter how reluctantly. 70%……no, it might be 80%! You won’t be able to pay without raising the tax by that much."

Dale-san’s eyes opened wide. Paola-san was the same.

"No way I can do that! What do you think will happen to the elderly and children in that case!"

Those in the prime of their life would be fine. Without them this village wouldn’t be able to obtain harvest or the like. But, as for the elderly and children who are in weak position……it would be the weak people who would become sacrifice first.

"We won’t be able to live if we are levied with tax that high! Even if we can pay the compensation, the village will……"

I continued further.

"Then will you fight? The opponent will be fully armed fifty soldiers……no, the location is near so they might mobilize 150 people

to attack this village. That will become a tragedy don’t you think so? The crops in the field and the valuable things would be stolen, and the women will be—"

When I spoke until that far, Dale-san grabbed my collar and pulled up. His eyes are scary.

"……You’re going to punch me? Will the problem be solved with that? I’ll tell you this, the responsibility for this problem lies in you. There are matters that you have to prioritize rather than the farm work. Because you cannot understand that the situation reaches to this point. You who have no means to deal with this situation is disqualified as a feudal lord."

Dale-san gritted his teeth.

"Perhaps that’s true. But! ……You who don’t know anything understand nothing. I saw my father and big brother going to the house of the surrounding feudal lord to drink bringing gift all the time. They raised the tax and got into fierce argument with Paola’s father many times. In the end they participated in war and died……dragging Paola’s father with them! They caused everyone to go through hardships."

Dale-san looked at my hand. His voice was slightly shaking.

"Your hand is a hand that never did farm work. A hand that is used to hold weapon……surely your family is a rich one. Then surely you cannot understand. My feeling from watching my father and big brother playing around while the villagers were suffering……. I, didn’t want to become something like feudal lord! Everyone around me told me! They cannot live if the tax isn’t lowered more! They complained to me, that my fater is like this, my big brother is like that! Even though I cannot do anything, the dissatisfaction to those two always came to me……even when I became feudal lord,

everyone came complaining to me. I did as they asked! And yet……and yet!"

Dale-san let go of me and slowly collapsed to sit on the floor. Surely this person had forced himself until this point. When I thought that, somehow it felt like myself who was provoking him was pathetic.

It seemed the First was a bit sympathetic.

[……What, pathetic. Even though it would be fine if you dealt with those guys more a bit more firmly.]

The Second's words were a little harsh. But his tone was gentler by some degree compared to before.

[It become like this because you are only currying favor to your surrounding.]

The Third also spoke with a slightly kinder voice.

[Well, Dale-kun too is someone in the side that is unable to choose their position. Now then, Lyle……how about we kindly lend a hand to such Dale-kun.]

The ancestors who were able to sympathize with Dale-san's position were the First until the Fourth. At their era even Walt House was still a small feudal lord house. Because Walt House had climbed until the position of being able to act as caregiver starting from the era of the Fifth, the ancestors starting from that era had different thinking. Because of that they didn't have any kind words for Dale-san. But, it seemed they were sympathizing at least.

The Seventh murmured.

[It's only a village this size, I wish he can rule it without any problem.]

The Fourth could understand the position of both sides so he gave a follow up.

[If it’s small then it will also have its own share of hardships though.]

I spoke to Dale-san.

"……Do you want to somehow get out from this situation? If you make a request to me, I’ll do something about this hopeless situation."

Dale-san and others looked at my face.

I could hear the voices of Novem and others from behind.

"The back of Lyle-sama when he is like this……is really dreamy."

Zelphy-san spoke in exasperation.

"Even though it will be great if he can be this bold and quick-witted all the time."

Aria-san was a bit excited.

"So, somehow he seems different from usual but, perhaps this Lyle is also nice!"

Sophia-san is slightly doubting me.

"However, how will he solve this situation……. There is no way Maini House will forgive them that easily."

Dale-san looked up at me while slowly standing up.

"Come to think of it, the letter from the baron said that you can be relied on……besides, the negotiation with Maini House too……do you have some kind of connection?"

I declared decisively.

"Connection? There isn’t really any need to rely on such thing you know? No, I’ll use Sophia-san’s connection to meet with Medard-san and give him a proposal though."

Everyone is lending their ear to me. I’m nervous. I’m as nervous as before when I’m acting as an idiot noble son in front of a lot of people.

The ancestors are calling out to me who is like that.

[Pull yourself together Lyle! You are my descendant after all.]

I felt like laughing for a bit hearing the First’s words. Thinking how he told me [I absolutely won’t recognize you] before, surely this is a big progress.

Even so, the First who hated me the most at first felt like the one who recognized me the most right now.

The Sixth was laughing.

[Lyle, don’t let the other party sense your uneasiness. If you act confidently then the other side will also believe you! No worry, they are easier opponent compared to Vendra.]

Certainly, if it was negotiation then it would be easier compared to when facing Vendra-san.

"We are going to check the crime scene with both houses present."

Everyone waited for the continuation of my words. However, I wordlessly folded my arms.

Aria-san was the first one to speak.

"Eh? That’s it?"

I acted as though I’ve been waiting for her to say that and,

"The situation will move just from that. What, don’t worry. Please trust me. After all this kind of situation is my specialty. I descended from a house of count—the feudal lord noble Walt House. Its long history that surpassed 200 years isn’t just for show."

PIni-san was shocked.

"Co, count-sama!?"

No, my father is the count, and I’m just someone who got driven out but……well, let’s not say that for now. The other people are also surprised. For them the position of count was like an existence that was above the cloud.

"Dale-san, did orc ever appear in the past around this area?"

Dale-san put his hand on his chin while thinking, then he shook his head.

"I’ve never heard about anything like that since I was born."

The Second spoke enviously hearing that.

[How nice. At my era something like orc was in the cute category.]

What a cruel land. Well, it should be easily guessed by the time a dragon appeared there.

"The soldiers of the baron house came and periodically killed the monster isn’t it? Certainly the possibility that the orc wandered here from somewhere cannot be denied. But……isn’t there one more possibility?"

Zelphy-san immediately noticed.

"A dungeon. Certainly that’s possible. This area is periodically cleaned from monster, and the public order around Dalien is good. The surrounding territories are also proactively subjugating monster so……the possibility the monster came from dungeon rather than wandering from somewhere else is higher."

Dale-san was surprised hearing that.

Yes……the reason why the ancestors showed motivation was dungeon. There is possibility that a dungeon appeared nearby. We planned to obtain reward for solving the problem this time in the form of the subjugation right of that dungeon.

"In case there is a dungeon, there won’t be any time for having this kind of dispute isn’t it? Besides, monster will come out from the dungeon and go feral. At this rate it will be extremely dangerous. Whether for Bagan House or Maini House."

Dale-san nodded.

"Ce, certainly that’s true. It’s impossible for us to do something like subjugating dungeon. The Maini House is also the same. If there is dungeon that appeared somewhere in that forest……we will really need the assistance of the baron."

The Sixth spoke loudly.

[You idioot! Lyle won’t be able to challenge the dungeon in that case! If it’s a dungeon that has orc then Lyle will be able to obtain moderate amount of experience! No way we’ll let other steal it!]

The Fourth was also of the same opinion……not.

[The treasure inside the dungeon belong to Lyle! We want to replenish the fund for the future activity here, no way we can leave this to other people!]

I cleared my throat and speak to Dale-san.

"Now then, it’s a request so I will have receive a reward. However, it doesn’t look like this village will be able to give a satisfactory reward."

Everyone here made anxious face. Then, Paola-san raised her hand. She had a serious expression and her left hand was gripping her skirt. Her face is slightly red.

"M, my bod—"

When she talked till that point, the ancestors inside the Jewel spoke in turn.

[Don’t let her say it!]

[Yeah, that’s a bit troubling!]

[That kind of dedication is not needed! Because……it will trouble Lyle!]

[Treasure yourself more!]

[That’s not what we want!]

[H~m, the hurdle is high for Lyle I guess.]

[It’s really high. Well, this time also what we want this time is something different anyway.]

I hurriedly spread open my right hand and pushed it out toward Paola-san. Paola-san seemed to guess what I wanted to say and stopped her words in the middle. Was it alright like this? Well, I don’t know what she was going to say but, the opinion of the ancestors matched completely so it must be alright like this.

"And there! ……Dale-san, if there is a dungeon in the territory of Bagan House, will you hand over the right for its subjugation to me? I wish to be allowed the first turn for the dungeon."

For the current me it’s hard to enter the dungeon at Dalien. However, if it’s at this territory it’s possible if I have permission from Dale-san.

In case the dungeon is located at Maini House’s territory, I just need to negotiate to receive permission from them too.

Zelphy-san’s reaction to my action was—.

"Wa, wait! I cannot allow something like that!"

But, Dale-san thought for a bit before nodding.

"If you can do something about this situation with that, then I’ll permit it."

I don’t want Zelphy-san to hinder this, so I turned a smiling face at Dale-san.

"Thank you very much. Let’s put the agreement in document later and sign it."

Zelphy-san grabbed my shoulder.

"Oi! I won’t approve that. I absolutely won’t approve something dangerous like that you hear me!"

The inside of the mansion became noisy.

Only one person, Zappa-san was sitting down and hanging his head. He is muttering something in low voice, but no one would listen to him.

.

The next day.

We immediately headed to Maini House and met with Medard-san.

We only brought Pini-san with us. Zappa-san kept saying that he didn’t do any wrong and so on and struggled violently, so we didn’t bring him.

Medard-san listened to the sequence of events and felt enraged. His face is bright red and he folded his arms.

"……You are bringing him means that it’s fine for us to judge this person then?"

He said to me to hand Pini-san over right away. He looked like he would execute Pini-san right away publicly in the center of the village if I handed him over.

"Well, you will have to decide that in your talk with Dale-san. Also, why won’t we check the crime scene with both houses present? It’s important to confirm the situation properly."

Medard-san turned his gaze to Pini-san.

"With the situation like this, there is possibility that the story about the orc is also a lie. Certainly if there is dungeon nearby it will be dangerous but……are you telling me to believe this person’s excuse?"

Medard-san doubted the story about the orc. I turned a smile to him.

"But, what will you do in case that is the truth? It’s necessary to ascertain it. If there is no dungeon than that’s it. Bagan House will also mobilize in order to enter Bagan House’s territory and investigate that area too. If Bagan House leaves this alone then it will be a disaster."

It was said that treasure is placed inside dungeon in order to lure people inside. But, a dungeon that appeared in an unthinkable place won't be approached by human. If that happened, monster will overflow inside……eventually the dungeon will perish naturally. At the same time, a great amount of monster would be ejected to outside.

The number would amazingly range from a few thousand until tens of thousands even just from a small dungeon. It's a scale that can easily destroy small village or city.

I turned a serious face to Medard-san.

The Sixth sounded like he was having a lot of fun at this kind of time.

[You've got to fan up his sense of danger a lot. Something like joint investigation of the crime scene is just a front. After all it will be troublesome to search for the dungeon without representative from both houses.]

A dungeon is something troublesome for a feudal lord of a settlement or village. That was what I heard, but the perception of Walt House seemed to be really different from that. They treated dungeon like good luck that fell from the sky.

The Seventh also sounded delighted.

[I wonder what kind of dungeon it is. Can we put expectation on it seeing that there is orc? I'm looking forward to it.]

Walt House's members are having fun.

In contrast, Medard-san's expression was in distress.

"Medard-san, dungeon is unrelated with the divine of Bagan House and Maini House. It will result in great damage if monster comes out to the surrounding. It should be investigated if there is a possibility."

Medard-san closed his eyes. His mind understood it, but his irritated feeling toward Bagan House made him unable to honestly accept it.

However, this person is also a feudal lord. He opened his eyes and nodded.

"I understand. I'll accept this suggestion. Certainly it's dangerous to leave this alone. After all Bagan House cannot be trusted. It will intolerable if this matter is left alone like this. ……I will promise you the right to be the first challenger of the dungeon, but I will report this to my lord the viscount-sama. I'll only tell him that it's possible there is a dungeon here."

Ah, as I thought he doesn't have any trust for Bagan House.

The Second was vexed.

[Shit-! Now that it's like this we're going to quickly find it and enter immediately. There is possibility that the viscount house will also send their men here to investigate.]

Well, I cannot tell him to not inform the viscount here, so I nodded.

"Luckily, searching is my strong point. I think I will be useful for this."

I intentionally lifted up the Jewel's chain and shook the blue Jewel in display.

Medard-san is a bit surprised.

"You are using really old-fashioned thing. But, that will be helpful. In case we find a dungeon, other than the right to be the first to enter, I will also give you another reward."

Medard-san said that Jewel—Gem is old-fashioned. Certainly, right now its position is stolen by magic tool, coupled with its difficulty of use the Gem became out of date. The number of people using it is few is because of that.

"However, is this Lyle-dono's true personality? When you came here before you looked like you don't have any interest to this matter."

There is dungeon here so the ancestors are showing motivation. Though he wouldn't understand it even if I told him that. I turned my gaze to Sophia-san nearby.

She was about to drink the prepared tea, but her hand stopped and she looked at me.

"Wha, what is it?"

"Actually I got scolded by Sophia-san. So I'm trying to change my attitude slightly……"

It's a truth so I said that, but a laughing voice came from inside the Jewel.

The Third sounded delighted.

[Lyle, you can also make a joke aren't you?]

Sophia-san's face turned bright red and she tried to say something to me, but Medard-san laughed at that timing. He slapped his knee and then he smiled for the first time since we came here.

"I see. However, as expected from the daughter of Rowley House. She is really prim and proper."

Medard-san said that and looked at Sophia-san who he knew since the past with a complicated expression. She was raised well. A prim and proper person. —While he was happy with her growth, he looked sad somewhere. It must be because she is an adventurer now. In Banseim, a noble becoming an adventurer isn’t seen in favorable light.

"E, even Medard-sama! Lyle-dono, just so you know that before this wasn’t a scolding!"

I tilted my head looking at the flustered Sophia-san.

"Eh, but……"

"No but! Listen carefully, saying that kind of joke in a situation like this is improper."

The atmosphere of the place is softening so Pini-san seemed to be a bit relieved.

The ancestors are having fun with the end of the negotiation. They are talking livelily inside the Jewel.

[So it’s finally a dungeon!]

[No, before that we should check the crime scene just in case.]

[That’s troublesome. How about making Lyle searching the dungeon alone?]

[I wonder what kind of treasure there will be. It will be great if it’s rare metal or money.]

[The main object is for Lyle to earn experience right? ……It will be nice if there is no cute monster there.]

[I wish there will be something like dragon at the deepest room!]

[No, that will be hard with the current lineup. But……that’ll be the romance if it’s like that.]

When we are going to return after finishing the talk, Medard-san called me to stop. We talked with only the two of us.

"Lyle-dono."

"Yes?"

"……Young miss Sophia is a slightly pitiful girl. I couldn’t say anything because she is a daughter of another house but, she was raised really strictly. She would say that kind of harsh words but, please don’t abandon her even then."

Medard Maini……from a glance his appearance looked like a corrupt feudal lord, but he was really worrying about Sophia. I

thought that perhaps this is why Sophia-san sided with Medard-san so much like that. At the same time, I saw a bit of myself in her.

When I left my house, I was saved by Zel-jiisan—besides, right now I also have Novem. Aria-san, Sophia-san, Zelphy-san……at Dalien there was Hawkins-san, Rondo-san's party……I was able to get to know various people.

"Don't worry. Because we have gotten along really well."

When I said that, Medard-san smiled in relieve.

"I see. That's good. It looks like young miss Sophia is able to find a good match."

……Hm? Something seems wrong?

Chapter 27 – The Goddess Blessed Human and Monster Equally

The forest between Bagan House and Maini House.

I showed the possibility of a dungeon appearing there. We gathered manpower and representatives from both houses and entered the forest. The forest grew thickly and it felt like you would fall down if you mistook the place your feet stepped on. But, for the people who were raised here, it was something they were used to. When we arrived at the site where the retainer of Maini House was killed, the people of both houses glared at each other.

From Maini House there were ten people led by Medard-san participating.

From Bagan House there were Dale-san, and then Paola-san and Pini-san……along with Zappa-san, four people. There were also five of us adventurers.

Certainly there was trace of fighting at the site. Just like Pini-san said, there were trees that were forcibly knocked down. There were also gashes at the surrounding that seemed to come from stone axe and great sword.

Medard-san shut his eyes in frustration.

"……What a tragedy. Don’t worry, we will immediately prove your innocence."

He was remembering his retainer who seemed to be an earnest person. Medard-san was desperate to recover his retainer’s honor.

Dale-san looked around.

"This is obviously the territory of Maini House. Pini, the fighting happened here right?"

Pini-san nodded.

"Ye, yeah. I mean, yes, this is the place. An orc appeared here. It stole the great sword, then me and Zappa moved the corpse."

Medard-san is glaring at Pini-san and Zappa-san. The people of Maini House that Medard-san brought here were also the same.

"Isn’t it also you two who stole the sword?"

Dale-san couldn’t talk back. He moved his gaze not to Zappa-san, but to Pini-san in order to ignore Zappa-san’s remark.

Zappa-san isn’t trusted anymore no matter what he said.

"We didn’t do that. The great sword really was brought away by the orc!"

"……Do you think we will trust the word of you two who moved the corpse?"

It was a low voice. And then his eyes had sharp glint. Pini-san was surprised by Medard-san’s pressure, his mouth was opening and closing repeatedly. Then, Zappa-san talked without any guilt.

"Even though you got no intention to trust us no matter what we say anyway"

Dale-san raised his voice to Zappa-san.

"Zappa, I don’t allow you to talk. Open your mouth only when I permit it!"

Dale-san is acting more firmly compared to yesterday, but Zappa-san snorted.

"Don’t screw around. I don’t want to be told that by the guy who was crying, I don’t wanna be the feudal lord. If only you were doing your job more properly, this kind of thing won’t—"

I sighed while moving to stop Zappa-san, but Zelphy-san moved ahead of me and punched Zappa-san.

The First whistled and evaluated Zelphy-san’s right straight.

[That’s a nice punch using her hips rotation!]

Zelphy-san looked at Dale-san. Dale-san is nodding.

"We come here because of the request from Rodornia House. Listening to Bagan House’s order is also our job. Oi, brat……you’re a nuisance. Talk only when you are asked. You got that?"

Zappa-san who was punched flying got his left hand grabbed and lifted up by Zelphy-san. After getting threatened slightly, Zappa-san pressed on his cheek while nodding.

The Second is exasperated.

[He act strong toward ewak guy, but cowardly against someone he cannot win against……well, he is stupid and also got no tact. He isn’t a man that can stand above others.]

The Third speak while laughing.

[This kid will surely rule tyrannically if he become a feudal lord.]

Medard-san was looking down on Zappa-san. His eyes looked really cold.

"……You placed that kind of person at your side. This is why Bagan House cannot be trusted. Perhaps there are still various other things that you all are hiding?"

"……"

Dale-san looked down in vexation.

However, the Third commented to me.

[Lyle, he is saying such thing but Maini House too should have done various things to Bagan House. Because, there are idiots anywhere. It's impossible for the whole populace to be wise.]

Just like how not all feudal lord is wise ruler, the populace also isn't all wise or virtuous people.

Conversely not all feudal lords are corrupt, and not all populace are idiot or bad person.

The Fifth spoke with his usual emotionless voice.

[After all interaction between neighbors is more or less like this. They have similarly done various things to each other. Even if the problem this time is resolved, they will get into dispute again later anyway because of different problem.]

Then what should be done? It feels a bit lonely if they continued to live while glaring at each other. The Sixth seemed to notice from looking at my face and gave me advice.

[If they are glaring at each other, you only need to create a third side. Tell them that one is the enemy and they will be united.]

……Is that really a solution? Creating an enemy in order to erase an enemy.

It felt like such method is no good, but there is no ancestor who objected to the Sixth's opinion.

I took control of the place in order to begin the investigation of the area.

"Well, the problem won’t be solved even if we talk here, first let’s check this place. The retainer of Maini House was killed here. After that—"

Pini-san nodded.

"We moved the corpse. But, it’s true that an orc appeared. I only saw it in book before, but that was really an orc."

There is picture book of monster. It’s something that unexpectedly is also placed in a relatively small village. There will be a large difference between knowing and not knowing the enemy.

Although, how many people among the populace are able to read it…….

Medard-san gave instruction to his surrounding.

"No matter what the truth is, we will search whether there is a dungeon or no around here. Inform your surrounding if you find a suspicious place. After that, absolutely don’t move alone. Yell if the orc appear to call your ally."

The gathered men—Maini House’s people responded to the instructions that Medard-san are giving one after another, while a person who seemed to be a higher-up decided the detail. That person whose hair is mixed with grey hair divided the men into group of three and told them the place where they should head to.

The Second compared it to his own era and muttered enviously from seeing Medard-san and others.

[They are working reliably. It’s a great difference from my era.]

Unlike Maini House that is starting to act briskly, Dale-san and others are bewildered of what to do. Their side’s number is few. In addition, there is also the job of watching over Zappa-san.

Zelphy-san sighed seeing the dull movement of Bagan House.

"Can I ask you to stay quiet here because this is the territory of Maini House? Also, you can act together with them when we are searching the Bagan House."

Medard-san nodded.

"You're right. It will be troubling if they arbitrarily move here. When we entered the territory of Bagan House, I'll ask them to accompany us. Oi, someone keep watch on them."

One person came to look after Dale-san's group. His eyes are sharp and he showed dislike to Dale-san's group. Zappa-san tried to glare at the man, but when he saw the man is armed with hatchet and spear, he immediately averted his gaze.

I turned toward Zelphy-san and the girls.

"Then, because we can move freely, let's search for the dungeon. Err~……let's go this way."

Novem nodded at me when I told them that we are moving through the route that is going upstream the nearby river.

"Lyle-sama, should we split into two groups too?"

I shook my head.

"No, we aren't familiar with this forest. It's dangerous so let's travel with five of us together. The vanguard will be me……and Zelphy-san. Novem will be in the middle, Aria-san and Sophia-san should be at both sides I think."

Novem nodded happily to that. Perhaps she was testing me just now.

The First was about to say something.

[It’s fine even if you act separa—]

However the Second rejected that opinion.

[No. Take some distance and move just like now. There is also a chance that perhaps there will be even more troublesome monster than orc. It’s better to move in group. Besides, Lyle has Arts.]

The combo of the Fifth and the Sixth’s Arts told me the situation of the surrounding accurately. The movement of the enemy monster. The movement of the ally, the two houses…….

I looked around, red reaction—the red dots on the map that is displayed by the Sixth’s Search. The color that showed hostility is detected from nearby. Other than that the color is mostly yellow, while blue is Novem and others, along with Dale-san, Pini-san, and Medard-san, only them.

Red reaction could also be seen sporadically among Maini House.

And then, Zappa-zan was showing red reaction.

The Sixth sighed.

[Aa~, it’s that. This Art react to hostility after all. It will show red reaction among your ally too if they think badly of you.]

Zappa-san must not be having pleasant thought of me.

……It doesn’t matter.

"Lyle-sama, what’s the matter?"

Novem called out to me who stood still and looked at Zappa-san, so I shook my head and started walking again.

Zelphy-san took a slight distance and walked beside me.

"Now then, let’s go. Even so……if a dungeon really appeared, it will be the third in the area around Dalien. Haa, there isn’t enough people for this."

Dungeon’s subjugation fundamentally will take time. It’s necessary to settle down and deal with it.

Manpower along with time are necessary.

The second dungeon already appeared around Dalien, the knights and soldiers of Ventra-san, along with adventurers were spurred on to subjugate it.

Zelphy-san made a reluctant expression because there wouldn’t be enough manpower if a third one is appearing. It’s dangerous to leave a dungeon alone.

"It will be nice if it’s entrance can be blocked or the whole thing can be set ablaze."

The Fifth who listened to those words of Zelphy-san also had the same opinion.

[I’ve thought that before. Well, whether you try to burn it, block the entrance, or use poison……the end result will be the dungeon getting stimulated and cause it to go berserk so those methods aren’t used.]

Apparently throughout the long history there were many countries that attempted such thing and perished. The way to subjugate dungeon was unchanged since the past, by the power of human.

However the First said.

[Stupid idiot. It’s only worth it because you defeat it with your own strength!]

Those words were really like the First.

Like that I used the Arts frequently while progressing through the forest. Quagmire, tree root, grass……five people are moving through the place that is really hard to walk on. I advanced with a hatchet on hand. When we arrived to some distance away, the map floating inside my mind showed an obscure part. It looked like only that spot is distorted and doesn't show the map clearly.

There is also a lot of red dot reaction around it, and then the red dots can also be seen in the obscure part. But I cannot count the number.

The ancestors clamored seeing that reaction.

[It's there!]

[You are lucky, Lyle!]

[With this the incident will become vague, the war won't happen.]

[Let's enter right away. Come to think of it……will the map stay visible even if you enter inside?]

The Fourth didn't know about the Fifth's Art in detail.

He asked for explanation was surely because the spot where they labyrinth existed looked distorted.

[It look distorted from outside, but it will become clear if you enter inside. No problem.]

The Sixth was also the same.

[It's a type that has floors, or perhaps a type that is extremely wide……well, my Art will also function without any problem.]

The Seventh sounded happy.

[This sense of exaltation when finding it. It remind me of the past.]

Normally people would panic when they found a dungeon. In fact, Dale-san and Medard-san reacted like that.

Could it be, for feudal lord with the rank of baron or above their reaction would be the same like the ancestors, they would look forward and feel happy to find a dungeon? According to the ancestors, dungeon would give experience and also magic stone and material. Besides, there will be treasure in dungeon too.

—If you thought of this as time to make profit, then certainly it might be a joyful thing to find a dungeon.

I came to a stop.

"What's wrong?"

Zelphy-san who walked beside me looked at me. I told everyone.

"……There is a dungeon ahead."

.

The entrance to the dungeon beside the river.

I held a saber with my right hand near it, stabbed the vital spot of a goblin that approached me while swinging around a stone axe before pulling out the saber.

When the goblin fell, I immediately searched for the next prey and unsheathed my short sword, throwing it to the head of another gobbling jumping at me. Its head was pierced and it fall face up.

A slight distance away, the soldiers of Maini House were surrounding a goblin and stabbed it with their spear. As expected it was easy with a lot of people. Looking around, the number of goblin that I defeated was five.

Novem recovered my short sword from the goblin and approached me.

"Lyle-sama, are you alright?"

I don’t feel any enemy presence around, so I wiped the blood sticking on the saber.

"Yeah, I’m fine. There are also a lot of people around so it’s a relief that we won’t get surrounded."

Then, I noticed Dale-san who is holding a sword while shaking—and Zappa-san who escaped to behind him are looking at me.

"What the hell. Don’t screw around. Why is an ignorant city raised brat is that strong huh."

Zappa-san seemed to think of me as weak before. He was trembling. It seems he fears me more rather than the goblins that are familiar for this area. Pini-san and Paola-san criticized Zappa-san.

"They’re adventurer. There is no way they’re weak!"

"That’s right. More importantly Zappa, get to the front, don’t hide behind Dale."

Zappa-san made a complicated face looking at me. A younger person, furthermore someone accompanied by women—someone who he completely looked down on is actually strong, that must be scaring him.

"E, even I if I have a weapon!"

Zappa-san bluffed even then. Well, certainly having weapon or not is important. However, Medard-san approached us and glared at Zappa.

"Enough pretending to be tough. It’s not even unsightly anymore but laughable instead. However, you are more skilled than I thought. Honestly I’m also surprised."

I’m not used to getting praised, so I don’t know how I should react. Anyway, I only said thanks and then Medard-san looked around. And then he told me.

"The adventurer there—she is an instructor you said? She along with several of my soldiers entered inside but, it seems there is no mistake."

Medard-san explained to me while sending glances at Novem and Aria-san. Zelphy-san who returned back looked slightly relieved.

Even though it would be Bagan House’s territory in less than a hundred meter from here, the dungeon is located in Maini House’s territory. Because of that the right for it lies in Maini House. I felt a bit odd to that.

Even though it’s this near, but the right for it is clearly separated.

Dale-san and others also seemed relieved. With this the possibility of orc became stronger. And then, it means that now isn’t the time for both houses to quarrel with each other.

"……There really is a dungeon here."

Medard-san sounded dissatisfied.

"Yeah, there is. With this the possibility that my retainer was killed by an orc become higher. But, what you two did still cannot be forgiven."

Medard-san’s gaze is directed to Pini-san and Zappa-san. Zappa-san who was looking down in frustration yelled.

"Why!? It was a monster that did it! Certainly……we took the armor……but, you should be satisfied with this already!"

Then Medard-san glared at Zappa-san, and the soldiers raised their weapon. The weapons are directed to Zappa-san……and Dale-san and others, though not at us.

"Don't screw around, brat. Because of your fault my retainer's name got dragged through mud. He was ridiculed as incompetent who trespassed to another house's territory, got killed, and then got all his possession stripped from him! You are telling me to feel satisfied because it has been cleared up? ……Don't think that it's over with this!"

From the side who had been wronged it isn't something that can be endured. After all if Pini-san's story is true, the retainer of Maini House tried to protect Zappa-san and Pini-san.

They ignored that and let him died, on top of that they falsified the location of the death and looted the corpse after that.

Terrible. It's too terrible.

Sophia-san took off her gaze from Zappa-san.

"I cannot bear to look at him."

Aria-san seemed to have the same opinion. But, her tone isn't as strong as Sophia-san.

"As expected that's wrong no matter how you see it."

Zelphy-san sighed.

"Well, I have seen something even more horrible than this but, as expected this is still……"

Everyone showed reaction that as expected what happened is really something that is just not done. However, here—.

[It's that right? Perhaps inside Zappa-kun he cannot keep up with the situation anymore. Forget about saying what is good or bad, the problem lies before that. He cannot collect himself, or rather……everything he had done until now was always forgiven so his ego might be inflated. He is confused because reality is suddenly thrust before him isn't it? Well, he cannot be forgiven just because of that though.]

The Third said that until now Zappa-san lived in a confined environment—in the village where he did as he pleased and was forgiven for it. His childhood friend became the feudal lord and he was seen like his big brother. Even when he acted haughtily there was no one telling him anything. The adults who should be the one scolding him were gone and then he also had never gone out from the village so he didn't know about society—about the outside of the village. Because of that he caused big problem like this. If he had even a bit of knowledge and got out to learn about society, perhaps there would be a more different possibility.

He grew impudent and did something that couldn't be taken back. He suddenly got blamed by the surrounding and inside he couldn't collect himself.

The First said, [This guy is just a brat].

[He only know about his small village and the surrounding. He is lacking experience in many aspect and thought that he can do anything like a neighborhood bully. Even though he had gone out to battlefield too, just what the hell he has been doing huh.]

The Third was exasperated, but right now I'm troubled with the rising killing intent in this place.

When I was about to stand between them, Novem opened her mouth first.

"Everyone, it’s dangerous to quarrel here. For now, how about we return somewhere safe and organize the situation there?"

Told that they could continue this later there, Medard-san reluctantly told his soldiers to lower their weapon.

I looked at Zappa-san who still received cold gaze from the surrounding and thought.

Would I become like Zappa-san too I made a slight mistake?

Before I was driven out from house—what I could remember is my own room and the garden that could be seen from there. I was living only in those places, I knew nothing of the world or anything else, when I went outside I caused trouble for other people, and then I was showered with scolding—I also got sick of that. I wonder what is the difference between us?

While I’m vacantly thinking about that, Novem called out to me.

"Lyle-sama, everyone is starting to move."

"Ye, yeah……got it."

I shook my head and then when I was about to start walking, I felt a bad premonition. There was no reaction from the Arts. Right now I’m not using Arts.

"Eh, somehow……the cry of the birds sounds noisy……"

The First yelled when I was about to look back.

[Lyle, take out your weapon!]

When I unsheathed my weapon in panic, the surrounding became noisy. I murmured with a small voice. I slowly lowered my posture and used Arts.

"Full Over……Map, Search……this is……enemy is coming!"

Did it see us who are going to leave the dungeon’s entrance? The approaching reaction is displayed as red, and then there is the sound of something cutting a swath through trees.

The footstep—is loud. Besides the birds are noisily flying away.

Inside the gloomy forest, the presence of something approaching made everyone took weapon into their hand. Dale-san also readied the sword he carried from his mansion.

"Paola, get behind me! Pini and Zappa too!"

Medard-san ordered his own soldiers.

"Form a line!"

The soldiers formed a line to protect Medard-san. The Second spoke in a good mood seeing their movement.

[Nice reaction. They are well trained.]

The red reaction is only one.

Zelphy-san held the shield on her back with her left hand and took a stance with her unsheathed one-handed sword. Novem readied her staff, while Aria-san and Sophia-san are also readying their weapon a bit late.

Dale-san stepped forward in order to protect his people, while Medard-san told his people to step forward on the contrary.

Their reaction here is also different.

The enemy’s footstep is gradually growing louder. I knew that it’s very near from the Arts.

"It’s coming……from the front!"

Then, the rocky area dungeon entrance—there was a shadow jumping down from above there. The silhouette is humanoid, but it isn’t human.

A monster.

The Fifth is slightly surprised.

[Hee, it’s unusual.]

The monster that appeared in front of us—the orc was holding a great sword on its shoulder with its left hand. However, its appearance wasn’t like the orc that I knew.

Its size surpassed two meters, and felt like it could reach three meters. It has many differences with the orc in my knowledge. The two fangs jutting out from its lower jaw and the pig nose are the characteristic of orc. But, it also has body hair growing on its shoulders like fur. The color of its skin also feels different from what I know.

Besides—.

Other than the waist cloth that is normally worn by orc, it also wear cloth and armor on its limbs which make it look somewhat decent. Its large red eyes are directed to us, and a low growl rise out from its lightly opened mouth.

Pini-san yelled.

"That great sword……it’s this guy! Bu, but, the weapon wasn’t that big—"

It seems even the great sword has become bigger. It’s absurd.

Medard-san yelled.

"SO IT’S YOU BASTARDDDDD! Raise your spear! Charge!"

Seven soldiers held their spear firmly and they all charged toward the orc and stabbed.

But—.

The sound of wood breaking. Metal made an unpleasant sound, and then the spears didn’t pierce the orc. I heard that orc has thick skin, but I didn’t think that it will be this hard.

Zelphy-san yelled.

"Back down! That thing is subspecies!"

The orc faced the soldiers whose spear was broken and swung its great sword. Brute force. That attack which contained no skill at all destroyed the spears that were still alright too.

A single horizontal swing. ……It was a swing like a hatchet brushing away the leaves and grasses in the way.

Zelphy-san jump forward.

"Lyle, you guys back me up!"

Zelphy-san held up her shield and jumped in front of the orc. She helped the soldiers backing away while taking a stance with her weapon. The orc who got attacked has a thick skin that is excessively hard, in addition his size is also larger than normal. His figure is truly the personification of fiendishness.

"Novem, cover us with magic! Do it in the way that doesn’t burn the surrounding."

Novem held up her silver staff and gathered wind to the surrounding.

"Understood."

Her tone is gentle. But, the gaze that Novem directed to the enemy orc was stern.

Aria-san and Sophia-san were standing still on the spot with their weapon in hand.

"Both of you, please guard Novem!"

Sophia-san stood beside Novem with her battle axe.

Aria-san held her spear and stood at the opposite side.

Novem said to me.

"I’m going."

Novem who finished preparing her magic directed the staff’s tip to the orc. Zelphy-san dodged the orc’s great sword while attacking with her sword.

Fire balls flew from the sword. The opponent still only got scratches dealt on its body.

"Zelphy-san!"

Zelphy-san who reacted to my voice dodged the great sword that the orc swung randomly while rolling on the ground to take distance from between the orc and Novem.

Novem chanted the name of her magic.

"Wind Cannon!"

The compressed wind is fired toward the orc. The surrounding trees shook due to the fired magic, and then green leaves and fallen leaves were hoisted up toward the orc.

Speed, power…….it was a powerful attack that possessed both.

When the magic collided, wind blew wildly around with the orc at the center. When the wind settled, countless leaves fluttered down in the surrounding.

The orc stabbed its great sword on the ground and stood calmly. He was pushed back only a little……a distance that wasn't even a meter.

The orc slowly pulled out the great sword from the ground.

If it's the average monster……if it's a normal orc then Novem's magic will blow it away. But this orc is a subspecies orc that endured Novem's magic and even showed composure.

"My apologies. Firing even stronger magic than that in this place is……"

Hearing Novem's words, I also unsheathed my reserve saber and stepped forward.

"I'll buy time. It will be hard with just Zelphy-san alone."

Zelphy-san already stood up and approached the orc. When I stepped forward, we took position that put the orc between us.

The Second advised me.

[If you keep it between you two and don't chase too deeply, you will be able to buy time. Even so it looks hard. It feels like fire or lightning will be really effective but……]

The Third watched the situation while,

[Haha~, the place here is bad. Furthermore the dungeon is nearby. It will be dangerous if you carelessly burn the surrounding and stimulate the dungeon.]

His tone was light like it was other people’s problem.

The Third was as usual.

Medard-san yelled.

"Get a hold of yourself! Raise your hatchet! Protect that young miss!"

If there is any prospect of winning, it would be Novem’s magic. Because of that it’s indispensable to secure Novem’s safety.

The soldiers stand around Novem. Their hand is holding a hatchet that is a tool for entering forest. It doesn’t look fitting to fight a monster at all.

The First is laughing.

[What, so these guys have guts! Lyle, show your guts too!]

I want to show it here but, the skin is harder than imagined. ……It’s hard to cut it with my saber. Even if I stab, my saber will be the one that snap.

Zelphy-san stand in front of the orc and tell me to move behind. Then, the orc showed opening when it tried to turn toward me. Zelphy-san slashed without delay in that timing.

When the orc turned toward Zelphy-san, this time it’s me who slashed.

The orc who is swing around its great sword randomly slashed the trees. I thought that the sword would stop from hitting the trees, but the great sword cut through without stopping.

That power would easily cut up even armored knight.

It shocked me that a subspecies will be this different.

"This guy, he is really hard!"

Zelphy-san was also irritated. She take distance, and then she evade the attacks and send small slashes at the opening shown. I'm also the same. If its attack hit I won't get out of it safely, so I dodge and cut it with my saber only as harassment.

Zelphy-san intentionally put a nearby boulder behind her and raised her shield. The orc stopped moving and slashed at Zelphy-san.

Zelphy-san dodged that attack, making the great sword struck the boulder.

"Look, with this its weapon is brok……it failed huh. God dammit! Could it be a quality blade!?"

The unbroken great sword deeply slashed into the boulder.

Medard-san denied that.

"Impossible. That sword isn't something that—"

The orc forcefully pulled out the great sword that was stabbed deeply into the boulder. The boulder broke and then I looked at the great sword's blade.

For a moment I saw some cracked spots, but they shined and immediately returned to normal.

"That's possible?"

It make me want to call out unfair, but it's no use even if I say that. When I was about to harass it again, I heard Novem's voice.

"Lyle-sama, Zelphy-san! ……Here I go!"

Hearing Novem’s voice, we take distance from that spot. The ground where the orc is standing reacts to Novem’s voice and protrudes up.

"Eart Hand……Earth Needle!"

Novem used two spells.

Multiple hands made from earth appeared from the ground and caught the orc. But, the orc struggled violently and forcefully destroyed those hands.

However, it was fine as long as it stopped moving.

A large thorn in the shape of a cone made from earth immediately thrust out from the ground. The sharp thorn is larger than the orc. Half of its body is pierced and it lost its body part.

"We did it!"

When Aria-san cheered, the surrounding also felt relieved at that scene. But, I kept gripping my saber tightly.

Zelphy-san also clicked her tongue.

"Chih, it’s the worst. Aah, shit!"

The orc that lost half its body……however, the orc moved its head and then destroyed the needle with the great sword in its right hand.

Its body that was pierced and separated is connecting as though pulling against each other. It was a really mysterious scene.

[Lyle, do it. You’ve no duty to wait for it.]

Hearing the Fifth’s voice, I leaped out and slashed at the orc with two sabers. Zelphy-san also hurriedly slashed, but no matter how many times we cut, the regeneration won’t stop.

Far from that, even when it’s in a state of half body, the orc is swinging the great sword with its right hand.

When we take distance, I looked at my blood soaked sabers.

I stabbed into its body. I stabbed its heart, but the orc was slowly regenerating and looked at its own left hand. It was opening and closing it.

And then, it looked at us as though nothing happened.

"Something like this……how can we fight it……"

An enemy that regenerate completely whether you cut or stab it. In addition the place also isn’t suited for using magic. It will be easy if we can burn it all at once, but we are inside a forest where we cannot do that. At present the terrain and affinity of this enemy is too bad.

"If we can escape quickly using Arts……that’s impossible huh."

If we run away using the Fourth’s Art—Speed, certainly we might be able to escape successfully. However, even if all the people here use the Art, their body isn’t familiar with it and they won’t be able to escape well. Just like how when Aria-san and Sophia-san fought each other……if they are unlucky, the orc might kill them when they fell.

But, the Second was calm.

[I see……an Art huh. This Orc, its Art manifested. Perhaps his regeneration is the ability of that Art. However, the affinity is bad. It’s best to blow it away in one go with magic but……]

When I’m wondering if such thing is possible, the Third speak to me.

[Eh? Lyle is doubting it? Or rather……the opponent has gone through “growth” you know? It won’t be strange if it also has Art. It’s rare though.]

I spoke with a small voice.

"If possible I wish you will teach me how to defeat it."

The Ffirst laughed while,

[Something like that is simple! If you keep slashing him until it can’t regenerate—]

Then the Third cut off the First’s words again.

[It’s simple. You should escape. We don’t want to stimulate the dungeon by fighting here. Then, you should lure it to a place where you can fight it with all your strength.]

"Even if we’re running away, where to……"

The Third said.

[It’s no good if you said running away. It sounds more positive to say it as luring it to a place where you can fight it. Lyle, you can just ask the local. The shortest route—to get out of the forest from here.]

I held up my saber while yelling.

"From this place—where is the shortest route to get out of the forest!?"

While no one is unable to move, Medard-san yelled a bit later.

"I, it’s faster to head toward Bagan House’s territory! If we cross the river from here it will be the shortest route there!"

Why does Medard-san know that?

There is no time to ask about such thing, so I confirm it with Dale-san.

"Is that true?"

Dale-san spoke with a trembling voice.

"Ye, yeah, it’s true. But, there is almost no road along the way. It’s a place that no one passed through. Getting through there is—"

The Second immediately made the decision.

[It’s decided. Get out from forest through the shortest route. The path we used to come here also isn’t maintained after all. Then, it’ll be the same even if we choose the shortest route.]

The Second’s plan is to have the other members go ahead and protect Novem while getting out of the forest. We will fight the orc while buying time. And then, we will lure the orc until where Novem is, where she will hit the orc with her greatest magic—that’s the plan.

I explain that to everyone. Zelphy-san who is attracting the orc’s attention is already starting to tire.

She has been fighting until now and also bought me time to think.

"Novem is to head outside the forest through the shortest route—I will buy time. If you all can prepare some marker for me, I’ll rely on that to lure the orc your way."

Then Novem reject the plan.

"No! Lyle-sama doing that alone is—"

Zelphy-san’s breathing was rising.

"Lyle, can you find the marker while in the middle of fighting and lure this monster there!?"

It will be difficult, but I also have Arts so I think it’s possible.

If there is a problem, it’s how I will have to fight the orc while also checking the map at the same time.

It’s difficult to use multiple Arts. It will also decrease my magic power, so it will really tire me. I also don’t understand how long my focus will continue.

"I’ll do my best."

"That’s not something you do unless you can assert it confidently!"

I got yelled by Zelphy-san. When the orc slashed at Zelphy-san, Aria-san rushed in front of her.

It seemed she accelerated with Art and instantly leaped to in front of her.

"E, even I can do it! Rely on me……a bit more!"

Sophia-san also moved in respond to Aria-san’s voice. She slashed at the orc with her battle axe. The orc turned its great sword to Sophia-san and swung—.

"I can do it!"

Sophia-san stopped the great sword with her battle axe. Looking closer, Sophia-san’s legs are sinking into the ground.

With a serious voice the Third—.

[Hee, that’s really an interesting Art. So it can make thing lighter and heavier. Right, okay……Lyle, try fighting together with these two.

You will be able to buy time with certainty if it’s with the three of you.]

When the Third recognized Aria-san and Sophia-san, the Second didn’t sound amused.

[Good grief, relying on the strength of these stupid duo. Lyle, cover up for them so they won’t get injured.]

The First muttered toward Aria-san with a voice that wouldn’t reach her.

[Aria-chan……]

I fixed my grip on the saber.

"Change of plan—Aria-san, Sophia-san, and me will buy time. The rest will move through the shortest route while protecting Novem. We will lure this thing there."

Medard-san murmured while looking at me.

"……You planned that far in this short time. Got it. I’ll cooperate with you. Everyone, move while protecting young miss Novem! Don’t be slow! Run ahead and make the path easier to walk on!"

Then Pini-san yelled.

.

—Going back slightly in time.

Pini hurriedly approached Zappa.

And then he grabbed Zappa’s shoulders. Pini said to Zappa who was unable to stand from fear.

"Zappa, there is a path to get out of the forest from here. From that time……the path we used to trespass into Maini House's territory!"

Zappa returned to his senses when his shoulders were shaken and he looked at Pini's face with a taken aback expression.

"I, idiot. That path is dangerous……it's not a path you use when hurrying……mo, more importantly gotta run……"

Pini didn't let Zappa finish.

"You think it's fine to run away at this kind of time huh!? Everyone will die! Besides……staying useless until the end. Are you okay with that huh Zappa!?"

Pini's tone became somewhat rough unlike his usual timid self.

Dale listened to the two's conversation.

"There is a path!?"

Walking on a mountain trail……furthermore one that wasn't maintained was difficult. Sometimes there would also be dangerous place and place that couldn't be passed. If Pini and Zappa knew the safe path even if only a little, they would be able to get out of the forest faster with these two's guidance.

Pini nodded. And then, he looked at Zappa with a strong expression.

"I will stay behind and guide Lyle-san. That's why Zappa, lead everyone to get out of the forest."

Zappa was slightly relieved hearing that. But, he immediately looked at Pini.

"Wa, wait. Why are you staying behind? Together—"

Even if he was a hopeless idiot, Zappa too was a member of the village. If Pini who was his childhood friend was going to do something dangerous then he would want to stop him.

"I already have enough! Even though that person saved us……and yet, we did such thing……that's why, this time I'll properly……"

Even though he was saved by the retainer of Maini House, he was unable to do anything. Pini was regretting it.

Paola who was behind Dale looked at Pini.

"Pini……. Dale, let's leave it to PIni. We will have Zappa show the way and lead everyone out. We are just……a burden here."

Paola muttered in vexation. The thing that they could do was few. No, there was almost none. Dale also understood that and said to Zappa.

"Zappa……I'll leave showing the way to you. No, this is an order. Show us the way. Everyone's lives hang on this."

Zappa nodded several times while shaking. Like that he stood up, then Pini yelled at Lyle—.

.

"I will show the way for Lyle-san and others! Zappa will show the way for everyone else, so please follow him!"

I heard Pini-san's suggestion and worried. I want a guide. But, can I cover up for these two while also protecting PIni-san?

Then the Third told me to accept the suggestion.

[Lyle, let's leave this to them. If not, these two will be in the worst position. In order to make the event progress smoothly in the future

too, you'll have to prepare a stage for these two to show their worth. Furthermore it will have to be a stage where they risk their life.]

I immediately decided.

"I, Aria-san, Sophia-san……and Pini-san will stay behind. Everyone else please get out of the forest."

Novem was disapproving.

"Lyle-sama……"

I strengthened my tone.

"Go! Other than me< Novem is the only one who can defeat that orc with a single attack……there's only you."

Novem looked down and gritted her teeth, then she followed behind Zappa-san who started moving. Medard-san and his soldiers moved around her and they moved while protecting her.

If either one has to be done, then I who am able to fight in close quarter can only remain behind. Besides, if it's magic then Novem specialize in it more than me.

Zelphy-san looked toward us.

"My bad. But even like this I'm an instructor. Besides……if I run away here, I'll be a failure both as instructor and as a senior! No way I'll lose face like that!"

Zelphy-san who ran out of breath forced herself to stay behind. She had worked hard until now, so I thought it would be fine even if she retreat but—.

"That's reliable. I understand."

In the end, the five of us stayed behind.

Sophia-san deflected back the great sword of the orc with her battle axe.

"So we just need to lure this thing. Then, if we fight while falling back……"

Then the orc largely opened its mouth and roared. The inside of the forest goes astir.

"What……?"

When I check the surrounding with Arts, inside the forest—red light dots were starting to move.

Chapter 28 – Yell The Name

—Novem and others advanced while being protected by the mountain trail.

Zappa was in the lead. Dale and Paola were walking behind him. They advanced through the steep mountain trail while Medard and his soldiers were sweeping away the surrounding grass and hindering tree branches to make it easier to walk.

Medard was accompanying Novem.

He was going to teach Novem who was unfamiliar with walking inside the forest where she should step. But, Novem was walking without any problem. Her breathing also didn't look winded.

"Your legs and waist are really strong. You have experience walking inside forest?"

Medard was surprised with Novem's ability as good walker which was in contrast with her lovely appearance. It seemed he was curious at how she was able to keep up with them, the local people who were used to walk in the forest.

Novem didn't change her expression.

"A bit in the past."

Medard was thinking of telling someone to carry Novem on their back, but he was relieved because it seemed that was unnecessary. Right now they had to hurry to get out of the forest as fast as possible.

(However, the area around here too has really changed……well of course, it's already twelve years go so it can't be helped.)

Medard recalled the last time he entered the territory of Bagan House. It was when he was still a young child who didn't know better.

Even at that time there was many disputes between Maini House and Bagan House. There was a river so it was considered as the boundary of their territory, but there was no monitoring gaze inside the forest. The populace of both houses crossed the river and trespassed each other's territory in retaliation to each other repeatedly.

(I trespassed here for retaliation while also defeating monster. Doing that made me felt strong.)

Medard knocked down an approaching monster—a large moth with his hatchet. Monsters were gathering toward them since some time ago frequently.

"Why are there this many monster? Until now something like this has never—"

When Zappa who was walking ahead said that, Dale knocked down a moth with the sword he carried. There was no time to gather the magic stone or material, so they left the corpse behind.

Novem looked back.

"Lyle-sama—"

Medard felt complicated seeing her look.

When Lyle came to Maini House's mansion, he was bringing Zelphy and Sophia with him. The next time was also the same. From Medard's point of view, it looked like Sophia was opening her heart to Lyle. That was why he thought the two of them were lover.

(Good gracious, young miss Sophia too, she approached a preposterous man)

If Lyle was simply bringing along beautiful girls around him, the he would just be a trifling man. But, right now he was facing off against a fiendish monster and immediately offered a method to win. His comrades—including Sophia chose to fight together with Lyle.

(I heard that Walt House—disinherited its oldest son, but why was he disinherited? Was it because of his bad philandering habit?)

Medard who had received report about Lyle recalled when he visited the mansion. He was a young man who seemed unreliable, but he didn't look like a bad person.

He felt puzzled at the matter of disinheritance, but right now the priority was to get out of the forest.

"A, a bit more. If we pass through here—"

Zappa who was walking at the lead advanced through a much steeper spot. Before long, they passed through the forest and the outside came into view—.

.

Orc subspecies.

Aria-san was facing it off. She held her spear, dodged the great sword while launching attack at the opponent. Speed increase. It was an Art that was similar with the Fourth, but it was a type with more explosive power. She is moving quickly around the orc, evading the great sword and thrust with her spear.

The spear has better quality than the soldiers' spear, so it doesn't break from attacking, even so the spear didn't pierce through.

"This guy is hard!"

I made Pini-san went ahead and told Zelphy-san and Sophia-san to standby at the next luring checkpoint. We are fighting by taking turn with rest in between, and then luring this orc until outside the forest. That’s all we have to do, but this is inside the forest where we aren’t used to fighting in.

In addition the enemy orc is a subspecies. It’s strong, furthermore the surrounding monsters are converging toward us.

Even now I slashed my saber at a goblin that jumped out from a bush.

"Aria-san, we are going!"

"Go, got it."

Novem and others who had passed here first cleared up the grasses and branches to make the route somewhat easier to walk through. We are retreating by going through that path.

I made Aria-san went ahead before turning my back on the orc and ran away.

The orc swung up his great sword in a large arc toward me who was turning my back to it, and then it swung down. But, the Second’s Art, All—.

I can detect my whole surrounding with it. I moved aside without looking back, dodging the orc’s attack. The great sword stabbed the ground right beside me. The mud come flying but I pay it no mind and run through the forst.

"Haha, if I use the First’s Limit Burst, I’ll be able to fight it a bit."

If I use the Art that draw out my body’s ability surpassing the limit, I think it will be possible. Although, I cannot cut open the hard skin of the enemy with the saber at hand.

The First was slightly frustrated.

[Can you do it if you have a more reliable weapon?]

Surely he is recalling the great sword—the zanbatou he used in the past. Certainly, if I have that kind of weapon, it might be possible for me to fight the pursuing orc.

Like that I arrived at the place where Zelphy-san and others are waiting. This time Zelphy-san and Sophia-san are facing off the orc.

"This orc bastard, this time we’ll take you on!"

"If it’s the me right now—"

This time it’s our turn to confirm to Pini-san about the next location we will head to.

"Pini-san, is there a place where it’s easy to fight in the middle of heading to the next location?"

PIni-san shook his head at me.

"That’s impossible. The path from here is really steep……normally people won’t come through here."

When I looked back while moving, Zelphy-san and Sophia-san were holding back the orc with Sophia-san as the main fighter. But, I felt pained when looking at Aria-san.

She is breathing roughly. She isn’t used to fight while using Art, and the environment is also the worse for her. This was hard on her.

The Second is worrying about me.

[Lyle, can you still go on?]

I tightly grasped the Jewel and showed my affirmation. Certainly it’s hard, but I can still endure. Then the Second—]

[Yosh, then next time tell the three to rest. Then you will lead the orc until the location of the three after checking the path.]

It seems he is worrying about the remaining members. Well, everyone is female other than PIni-san, perhaps it’s only natural.

The Fourth is picking fault on me.

[Lyle, speak out more to them.]

He told me to speak out to Aria-san. I looked at Aria-san who seemed to be in pain.

"Are you alright?"

Aria-san forced herself to smile. She is sweating a lot. Besides, perhaps because she is forcing herself hard to fight inside the forest, her appearance was ragged.

I take the leaf that was stuck on her hair.

"I’ll have the three of you rest at the next place. Aria-san please go ahead and standby there."

"I, I can’t do that."

The First was happy at Aria-san’s attitude. But, at the same time it was also troubling him it seemed.

[Aria-chan, you’re really a good girl. But, I don’t want to force herself too hard.]

The Second spoke with slightly strong tone.

[Tell her that making the three of them rest is a tactic. She will be a hindrance if she fights in her state.]

The Second called her a hindrance, but as expected he must be concerned for Aria-san. As expected I cannot tell her with the exact words that the Second used.

"I'll ask the three of you to fight at the next place. I also want to rest, so please buy me time then."

Aria-san thought for a bit before nodding.

.

—The four was luring the enemy while fighting.

Right now Lyle was facing against the orc by himself while the three were resting. Sophia was sweating from her whole body, she felt her clothes sticking on her skin.

Her Art adjusted weight.

She recalled how Novem said it was a rare Art. Thanks to such Art, she was able to change the weight of her battle axe which allowed her to freely wield it.

If she increased the weight when swinging down, the attack would be stronger than normal. But, because she wasn't used with using the Art, the control was difficult.

"If only……I can use it more skillfully"

At present the only weapon that could properly clash with the orc subspecies was Sophia's battle axe. Aria who was leaning on a tree while sitting and hugging her spear was drinking water from a flask. However, the water already ran out.

Sophia saw that and searched for her flask in order to hydrate herself too. But, she must have dropped it somewhere because it wasn't on her waist.

"……Haa"

Right now Lyle was buying them time. Because of that, they could take a breather like this.

Zelphy wasn't standing. She fought the monsters that were appearing sometimes, securing their safety. She did that while throwing a flask at Sophia.

"Here, drink."

"Eh, ah……but"

This was Zelphy's flask. If she drank it then Zelphy wouldn't be able to drink. Besides, Zelphy should be even more tired than them.

Zelphy said to the worried Sophia.

"Idiot. Do you think I'll lose in stamina against rookies like you two? I'll have you work hard after this too. So rest your body properly. Aria, you can still go on right?"

Aria looked at Zelphy and nodded. Even her hair was wet with sweat.

Pini spoke to the three.

"Only a bit more. We can get out of the forest soon so"

Zelphy scratched her head.

"The little bit more of the local people feel quite far from the view point of outsider though. However……that Lyle, he is really can be relied on t this kind of time huh."

Sophia also drank water and nodded while wiping her mouth.

"You’re right. It feels like he even become another person."

Under this kind of situation Lyle became reliable unlike normally. It was also the same with the previous bandit group subjugation. Sophia felt from her heart that the current Lyle was reliable.

Sophia’s cheeks slightly turned red from something other than fatigue—.

.

[Lyle, splash the mud there to the orc’s face. It will be easier for you if you can also crush its eyes while you’re at it.]

Hearing the Third’s words, I looked at the sabers on my hands. Is he telling me to throw the weapons, scoop the mud and throw it at the enemy’s face?

The Sixth laughed at me while,

[Lyle, do it with your foot. Foot. Well, even if you crush its eyes, this guy will quickly regenerate it so the mud will be enough.]

The Fifth recalled something.

[Well, there is also no way you can survive just by fighting in a nice manner. Lyle, try it. It’s practice. Practice. Ah, crush its eyes too. It’s practice after all.]

The ancestors told me who is facing an orc subspecies to practice.

"You all are absolutely having fun with this!"

I who dodged the orc’s attack scooped the mud on the ground with my foot tip, and kicked up toward the orc’s face.

I aimed at the opening when the orc tried to wipe the mud stuck on its face, and slashed the area around its eyes with my saber. Blood mixed with mud flew to the surrounding, but the orc didn’t even flinch. It’s starting to regenerate right away.

The Third who saw my slash whistled.

[Nice. Your blade headed accurately to the place you targeted. Yep, as I thought Lyle has skill. Right, you have it, skill that is.]

Isn’t it fine to not expressly say it in the way like skill is the only thing I have? The Second pondered for a bit while,

[What should we make him do next? Eye crushing with a throw?]

The Third snapped his fingers.

[Good one! And so, Lyle, next blind it using a throw.]

"You guys are really composed! Do you think I have that kind of leeway!?"

The orc swung up its great sword, so I leaped until a distance where it wouldn’t hit. Bit by bit. It’s really only bit by bit but, the way the orc is swinging its great sword is becoming appropriate.

It’s starting to get used to the weapon.

I look at my saber. It’s a product that is only for several times of use, but even this saber that I had only just bought is already worn out. Perhaps it’s necessary for me to buy one with better quality or changing the weapon altogether.

"It’s like I’m facing against a rock."

It feels like slashing a moving rock. I cannot do anything with the saber I have.

I’m moving to the next place while luring the orc.

I used the Art’s Map and confirmed the distance until outside. I’ve already moved through quite the distance, it won’t be far until I get out of the forest.

Novem and others are preparing the ambush.

"This, wouldn’t it be better to choose path that is easier to walk?"

When I said that, the Second laughed.

[Easy to walk? Inside a forest? Even though there isn’t any maintained path or anything? It’s the same for Lyle and others no matter where you fight. The longer the route goes on, the more you will be fatigued facing off against this opponent.]

Certainly, this is harsh for my stamina and mana. Perhaps this shorter route is better.

The Third seemed to keep track of the time and informed me.

[Now then, it’s about time. Let’s move to the next place.]

I who turned my back toward the orc immediately began to lure it. The orc chased my back and slashed.

I somehow manage to dodge with the Second’s Art, but my stamina and mana are nearing the limit.

I run through the path that I’ve confirmed beforehand and lead the orc even while almost stumbling sometimes.

"Aa, geez. This is pathetic somehow."

I hate myself that is only running away.

The Third laughed.

[It’s fine. You still have a way to defeat it. Besides you know, it’s not like you’re running away. This is a luring strategy. It’s progressing well so you’re doing a good job. Look, stick to it a bit more.]

My feeling become slightly comforted hearing what the Third said. Certainly, thinking of it like that feel more comfortable. Though I want a method so someday I can deal with even this kind of situation someday.

Like that when I arrived at where the four are waiting, I run pass them and leave that place along with Pini-san.

"Please buy some time!"

Zelphy-san lifted one hand.

"Leave it to us!"

.

—Outside the forest, Novem was preparing her magic with faith that Lyle’s tactic would be successful.

She grasped her silver staff with both hands and closed her eyes.

(……It’s fine. Lyle-sama will definitely come. Besides, if those two and Zelphy-san are with him……it’s fine)

Novem said ‘it’s fine’ repeatedly inside her heart as though to convince herself.

(Aria-san’s Art is speed increase. She won’t lose easily against that “adapting variety”. Sophia-san’s Art is weight control—she can fight against that orc even from the front. Putting aside Aria-san, Sophia-san is fortunate. That person can be used.)

She understood the two’s Art and then she called the orc subspecies as “adapting variety” inside her heart.

(Zelphy-san is experienced. She won’t lose easily. Besides, it will be troubling if they lose. In order for that……)

Novem slowly opened her eyes. She finished her preparation to fire her magic.

The people of Bagan House and Maini House around Novem were watching her.

"……It came."

When Novem said that, the sound of battle could be heard near the forest’s entrance. It meant that there was a fierce battle against the orc and the people left behind were surviving it.

Dale-san yelled.

"Pini!"

The first one to get out from the forest was PIni. Novem lifted her staff and took the stance to fire magic—.

.

The exit of the forest came into view.

But, we cannot just exit from the forest like this. We are surrounding the orc and facing it with four people, but this orc……it’s trying to return inside the forest.

"Don’t go back after coming this far!"

The Third was slightly surprised.

[Hee, does it noticed? Well, it might only feel something like bad premonition.]

The Second also agreed.

[Sometimes there is, isn’t it. Monster with intelligence. There are goblins like that, so surely even orc can be like that.]

The First yelled angrily.

[There is no way these guys can think like that!]

The Fourth seems like he want to say something to the First, but he stop midway and say different thing.

[……Well, conversely there are also humans who aren’t using their brain at all. However this is troubling.]

The Fifth spoke with his usual emotionless voice.

[If you let it get away then all your effort until now will be for naught.]

The Sixth too didn’t seem particularly bothered.

[Well, if it get away then a troublesome monster will settle down in this forest, but Medard’s lord, the viscount will surely do something about it. Though certainly it won’t be funny if it turns out like that.]

The Seventh looked fed up.

[Muu, Lyle’s prey is……]

It will be unpleasant if we cannot defeat it after coming this far, so we surrounded it with four people to keep it from leaving.

Aria-san held her spear and then stood in the way of the path the orc was trying to escape to.

"No way I’ll let you get away after all this!"

Sophia-san slashed with her battle axe.

"Get—out there!"

The battle axe’s attack deeply cut into the orc’s arm, but it didn’t manage to sever it. The orc struggled and wildly shook off Sophia-san.

"Kyah!"

Sophia-san cutely screamed and let go of her battle axe. I caught her body.

"I, I’m sorry."

"It’s all right. More importantly, please step back."

The battle axe fell on the ground while the orc’s arm regenerated. The orc try to pick it up but Zelphy-san gets in its way.

"I won’t let you! You’re troublesome already with just great sword, no way I’ll let you steal this weapon too!"

While Zelphy-san isn’t letting the orc to steal the battle axe, I decided to use my trump card here.

"……If it’s Limit Burst, then I’ll be able to force that guy outside."

Sophia-san grabbed my hand.

"Lyle-dono, please use my weapon."

I looked at the battle axe that fell on the ground. Certainly, if it’s with that then I’ll be able to fight the grey colored orc enough.

"I’ll borrow it."

I stabbed my two sabers on the ground and started running while saying the Art’s name.

"Limit Burst."

Blue pattern of light surfaced on my body. I took the fallen battle axe into my hand. My strength increased, and then the surrounding sight looked clearer.

I close the distance in one breath and swing the battle axe horizontally. The orc stopped my attack with its great sword.

"This contest of strength……is honestly hard for me."

Even my physical strength is increasing. Even against an orc I can normally—or rather my strength surpassed it. I swing the battle axe and cut its body from its belly until its chest, dealing a large gash.

But, the wound immediately regenerate. Like that I inflict wound one after another but—.

"I can't push it back."

—The current me didn't have the strength to drag the orc outside.

The battle axe that I held with both hands clashed with the orc's great sword and sparks scattered. The battle axe that is the heirloom of Rowley House is durable as befitting a heirloom. Perhaps it's made from a rare metal.

Aria-san and Zelphy-san are blocking the escape path so the orc won't get away.

But, at this rate I'll reach my limit of using Art and collapse.

……I want, more strength.

I recalled the First's memory—the memory when he defeated a land dragon. The figure of the First that was as though he was enveloped in flame looked really manly and ferocious. If I have that power—.

The moment I thought that.

The pattern on my body started to shake fiercely. Something hot erupted throughout my body—I'm feeling such sensation.

I wonder why—I felt like, I can use the First's Art with just a bit more. The third stage.

However, I don't know the name.

"If only I know the name—"

I felt like I'll be able to use it right away with just that.

.

—Inside the Jewel.

The First noticed Lyle's unusual state.

[Lyle, you……going this far even without me teaching you]

The First reached the third stage when he was at his golden age, just a bit before he fought the dragon. And yet, Lyle was going to manifest it easily in an age of fifteen.

Even though he didn't even teach him, he could feel Lyle trying to forcefully draw it out.

When the First was going to teach the name, small blue light particles gushed out from his body. The surrounding ancestors saw that sparkling light.

The Second opened his eyes wide.

[……Oyajifather]

The First watched his own hand. And then he clenched it.

[Aah, I see. So that's how it is. Certainly. If it's that kind of role……it's a foregone conclusion, huh.]

The First's voice was laughing, but it sounded a bit lonely. The First scratched his hair. He slightly looked down, and then he stood up from his chair. He lifted his face and watched the scene outside that was projected in midair with a smile.

[I wanted to teach him more things though. But you know, the things that I can teach him……they can be taught by you guys too. Besides, this might be just right.]

He was happy with Lyle's growth while also wanting to watch over him even after this. But, he recalled what kind of existence he, they all were.

The Jewel recorded them as memory and resurrected them was in order to teach Lyle their Arts. It wasn't for imparting their knowledge and experience.

[……Thinking back, there is already nothing more that I can yell him about. There is also nothing that really matter that I can teach him. Good grief, I'm really pathetic.]

The First watched Lyle's figure fighting the orc and he folded his arms.

The Third spoke to the First.

[Is there something that you want us to tell him?]

The First shook his head.

[Not yet. I won't vanish yet. I'm tenacious. That aspect of me was also praised by the missus. She said that I'm a man who won't die even if I'm killed.]

Missus—it was the woman who was the First's wife.

The Fourth fixed the position of his glasses with his fingertip while making a small laugh.

[That's amazing. But, I don't know whether it's her praising or speaking ill of you.]

The First laughed. He laughed loudly.

[No mistaking it! ……That's why, I'll say by myself what I want to tell him. Besides, I want to at least tell that guy……tell Lyle my farewell.]

Like that the First swung high both his hands and then swung them down to the round table. Everyone opened their eyes wide at the hit that felt like it shook the inside of the Jewel.

And then, the First lowered his head to the other six.

[……I'll leave the rest to y'all. That guy, is my descendant. He's also, a good guy. He's my pride. He's the proof that the bloodline of someone like me is continuing……he was also able to meet with Alice-san's descendant. He also got some unreliable side of him though……so help him out.]

The Second clenched his fist.

[……Yo, you idiot. He is also our descendant. Of course we are going to do it. You don't need to worry about that. That doesn't suit you!]

The First lifted his face and laughed.

[Yeah, I'll leave him to you. Cause, you guys will be far more reliable compared to someone like me. I'm an idiot after all. Except by begging you guys like this, there is already nothing else that can I do for Lyle's sake.]

When the First made his resolve, the round table's chair……the First's chair vanished. And then, a great sword appeared at the place where the First was sitting at. A zanbatou—a weapon that was similar with the weapon the First used. A silver zanbatou was floating there.

The First looked at that and smiled slightly. He looked, and understood. That it was the [weapon] that he could leave behind to Lyle.

[What. There's something I can leave behind after all huh.]

And then he faced the ceiling and yelled.

[Lyle—yell the name. My Art already belong to you! Full Burst……that is my last Art!!]

The First's voice reached Lyle—.

Chapter 29 – Lyle's Growth

[Lyle—yell the name. My Art already belong to you! Full Burst……that's my last Art!!]

I heard the First's voice. His voice sounded really happy. In order to break through the current situation where I'm unable to overcome the orc I'm fighting, I yelled the name of the third stage—of the First's Art.

"Full……Burst!"

The bluish white pattern of light enveloping my body burst out, and then bluish white flame gushed out from my body. Strength is welling up from inside my body. No, I can feel the explosive sensation increasing my strength even more than before.

"I can do it. With this……"

I took a step forward strongly and glared at the grey colored orc. I fixed my grip on the battle axe and felt my arm's muscle swelling up.

The strength is overflowing.

"My bad but you won't get away."

Saying that I closed the distance with the orc and brandished up the battle axe. The speed output was also greater than before, the orc was bewildered and took a defensive stance.

The Jewel shined, and then gripping the battle axe I cut open the orc vertically.

The orc made a surprised face when the great sword also got bisected.

The orc immediately regenerated, but the great sword wasn’t regenerating back. The orc noticed my change and tried to escape after losing its wewapon.

It threw away the great sword’s handle and showed its back to start running away.

I immediately move and stand in its way to escape. Zelphy-san and Aria-san were also surrounding the orc. When I readied the battle axe, the orc looked at me with a scared expression. Then it moved its gaze to the unarmed Sophia-san.

The orc headed toward Sophia-san. I threw the battle axe. The battle axe drew an arc while rotating and stabbed the ground in front of Sophia-san. Sophia-san took it into her hand and immediately swung her weapon horizontally with all her strength.

"EAT THISSSSS!!"

The orc had no weapon to defend with and its arm was deeply wounded. When it tried to heal its wound, Sophia-san swung her battle axe further.

The surrounded orc turned its back to us and rushed toward outside the forest.

"Corner it there just like this!"

When we immediately gave chase, Novem and others were laying in wait there. The running orc saw the sight outside the forest and looked astonished. Does it notice that it was herded here? In that case it’s dangerous. It has to be finished off while it cannot escape.

"Novem!"

When I yelled, Novem looked at me in a bit of shock. She must be surprised by my body that is clad in bluish white flame. However, she immediately smiled. It was a smile that looked genuinely happy.

And then, she thrust her silver staff on the ground.

"Here I go—Flame Burst"

It was a magic that was categorized really highly even among the fire element. I held back Zelphy-san and others who were going to rush forward right away. Even so, she chose a really flashy magic.

Magic circle was forming right below the place the orc was rushing to.

The magic circle that was spreading in wide area is making complicated pattern with red lines. The temperature of the surrounding was starting to rise. However, the orc took a look at Novem and turned our way.

The Third made a displeased voice.

[Aah, I see. Well, Novem-chan is obviously looking more threatening here.]

He must be more scared facing Novem rather than us. The orc's expression was really scared. Desperate—it was drawn on its expression.

But, is it just my imagination that it also looked slightly sad?

Setting that aside—.

"It'll be troubling if it got away at this timing……"

No matter how powerful the magic is, it will be meaningless if it doesn't hit. What is necessary for magic is unexpectedly the skill to

land it on the target. If it’s just strength, then even I can match Novem equally……perhaps.

—The current us didn’t have the leeway to stop the orc right on its track. I cannot stop it with the sabers I had collected back. It’s also impossible for Aria-san and Zelphy-san. Sophia-san seemed to be in pain, she was supporting her body by using her battle axe as cane.

Everyone is at their limit. Even Novem might not be able to fire more magic after this.

Fire spark is gushing out form the magic circle. At this rate the orc will escape. All our effort until now—then, the First yelled at me.

[Stupid idiot! What are you doing giving up like that. Even if your weapon is useless, you bastard still have your fist……show me, Lyle!]

The First’s insult. And then, his voice that is believing in me makes me loosen my mouth slightly. I dashed toward the orc heading our way and threw away the sabers my hands were holding.

"Oi, what are you!"

Zelphy-san’s voice came from behind. I didn’t listen until the end. I clenched my fist and drew it back. Flame is starting to gush out form the magic circle and the magic is about to activate. Responding to my will, flame coiled around my fist and blazed up.

The orc also headed my way and clenched its fist tightly and drew it back for a big swing. It opened its large mouth threateningly and then it punched to send me flying.

[There, ram it with a big punch!!]

"With this, IT’S OVERRRRR!!"

Matching with the First's voice, I kicked on the ground and added the twist of my waist into my punch toward the orc. All movements were looking slow. When my fist catches the orc's face, it deeply sinks in. The orc's fist cut through empty space, while my full powered attack sent the orc backward—to the magic circle that started to spew out flame—explosively, my fist let out an impact that shook the air and sent the orc flying.

The blown orc’s body floated midair and it looked toward Novem. Its hand is reaching out.

But, the orc was swallowed by the flame that burst out right after that and its figure vanished inside the flame.

I landed on the ground, waved my left hand and created an ice wall in front of myself.

"Ice Wall"

Then, my mana run wild, an ice wall that is larger than expected is created. The heat from Novem’s magic is blocked by the wall of ice. From behind, Sophia-san along with Aria-san who is lending her a shoulder and Zelphy-san are walking toward me.

Aria-san was laughing.

"Ahaha, I can’t go on anymore……I don’t want to get into that kind of battle for the second time."

Aria-san was looking up at the giant pillar of lame while saying that. Sophia-san also agreed with her.

"Certainly……you’re right."

It was only Zelphy-san who was denying their opinion.

"If you are staying in this business for long, you will meet opponent that is equal or even stronger than this even if you don’t want it. If you don’t want to die, become strong. Right, Lyle. ……O, oi."

The flame coiling around my body was about to die out. And then, a terrible weariness attacked me. I was already at my limit of moving my body or holding on my consciousness. I see, so this is the problem the First mentioned……the fatigue after using the Art is terrible.

"I, I’m sorry. Please take care of the rest……"

When I closed my eyes and collapsed, I could hear footsteps rushing toward me. That was the last thing in my mind before I let go of my consciousness.

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—The next day.

The group that returned from the joint investigation back to the village rested their body.

As expected after such fierce battle, everyone was completely tired. Everyone other than Novem was lying down since the morning inside the hut that Bagan House lent them.

Novem was nursing Lyle who was making a pained look.

"Lyle-sama, are you still feeling painful? Even so you still have to eat."

"……I don’t want to eat."

It was a terrible fatigue. Lyle couldn’t even lift his body due to lethargy and intense pain in his body. He even refused to eat the food that looked like porridge Novem prepared from start to end. Novem brought the porridge using a wooden spoon to Lyle’s mouth.

Then, Lyle reluctantly ate only a mouthful and said.

"Bitter"

Novem smiled.

"I used a medicinal plant to make it. But, Lyle-sama should feel a bit easeful after eating this."

Novem scooped the porridge with the spoon and brought it to Lyle’s mouth. Lyle was refusing, but Novem absolutely wouldn’t back down so he opened his mouth again.

"……Bitter"

Lyle kept complaining, but the surrounding didn’t react to that. No, they had no will power that was able to react.

"Uauu……"

Aria who was lying down and unable to even turn over.

"I, it hurt……"

Sophia was also similarly writhing from the pain in her whole body. Zelphy was sleeping to recover her stamina.

Novem saw that and smiled.

"Everyone too, thanks for your hard work. It looks like the talk will resume the day after tomorrow. Apparently both Dale-san and also Medard-san are exhausted, and above all else they are waiting for everyone to recover before having the discussion."

Lyle didn’t seem interested.

"Whatever."

He said. However, hearing that Novem caressed Lyle’s forehead.

"Lyle-sama, please get better soon."

With a pale face Lyle looked like he was enduring the pain in his body and various things. Novem who was nursing the agonized four people should be in an unwell state too. But, even so she was looking after them because she was the only one who could move.

Then, the sound of the door being knocked came—.

.

—When Novem came outside, Paola was there.

"Err……thank you very much for before!"

Paola bowed. Novem smiled kindly at her.

"Don’t mind it. It’s something that Lyle-sama decided. Besides, it became a good experience for us too."

The problem between territories, and the battle against the orc subspecies inside the forest. Novem thought that the request this time was a great boon for them too.

(Yes. Besides, Lyle-sama managed to use Basil-sama’s Art. Surely something happened. Surely Lyle-sama……)

In Novem’s thought, the event in Bagan House this time wasn’t pointless, far from that she even felt thankful.

Paola began to report about the current situation.

"……Pini is forgiven. He already headed over there and returned the repaired armor and told the family of the deceased retainer of his last moment. It was also proven that it was Pini who informed the location of the corpse. Because of that too, Pini is forgiven. I’m really glad."

Paola’s expression was really relieved. It was as though she was more worried for Pini rather than Zappa.

Pini……he was threatened by Zappa and brought back the corpse to Bagan House’s territory. But, after that he sent letter to Maini House and notified them where the corpse was.

When he was told by Zappa to sell the armor, he also repaired it instead with the intention to return it to Maini House later. In fact,

he brought back the armor secretly from Zappa. In the first place something like broken armor didn’t really have value to be sold. However, Zappa apparently wanted to obtain weapon by selling anything that could be sold.

The courage that he showed at the orc subjugation and his manner of immediately heading to Maini House despite his fatigue. In the end based on the comprehensive evaluation, Pini was “the only one” forgiven.

Of course regarding Zappa, he wasn’t forgiven, both by Maini House and also by Bagan House.

"That’s great. Also, something is bothering me……was it Zappa-san’s fault that Paola-san couldn’t marry with Pini-san?"

Paola’s eyes opened wide hearing Novem’s words. And then she nodded.

"Actually, Pini himself doesn’t know but, there was a talk of marriage between me and Pini three years ago. Pini can read, write, and also count. Father and the previous lord liked him. They said that Pini will be alright as my husband. Perhaps, Zappa heard about that and he got impatient. He might be thinking that he would be able to marry me if he raise achievement……he really did something stupid. That’s why I hate him. He always run wild, selfish……because of Zappa’s fault too father was……"

Looking at Paola crying, Novem muttered "Is that so". What was necessary for a higher-up was managing ability. Paola’s house served as the village’s peacemaker. Because of that, it wasn’t fighting ability that was prioritized. The ability to read, write, count……people who could do such work was more appreciated.

Zappa misunderstood everything from the beginning. That was why, three years ago he willfully rushed by himself and did something stupid. He was an ignorant neighborhood bully.

(……He is completely different from Lyle-sama.)

Even though the two were similarly ignorant of the world, Lyle was trying to learn. He kept worrying all the time, and then walked forward with his own strength. That—was something Novem felt proudly about.

Paola lifted her face.

"……But, with this the talk can finally progress. There is no other candidate, and also no one getting in the way. I finally can be together with Pini. Thank you very much."

Looking at Paola’s delighted face made Novem’s heart felt slightly hurt. That might be a jealousy toward Paola.

"……That’s really great, Paola-san."

Paola said her thanks to the smiling Novem. Novem felt slightly envious at such Paola. Because she was able to be together with the person she loved—.

.

After returning to the village, at the morning of the day when the discussion would be held.

I stood up inside the hut and stretched. And then, looking at the light shining in from the small window, I smile.

My upper body is naked. The fatigue and various pains and agony that I felt until tomorrow is gone, right now it feels like I have been reborn.

And then I understood. That “sparkle sparkle* sensation when I opened my eyes. Yes, this is exactly the “growth”.

"What a refreshing morning. I feel like I have been reborn……so this is growth."

I spread my arms and looked up to the ceiling.

It’s like the scenery I saw until yesterday looked like different thing. Everything is……looking like they are blessing my reborn self.

"I feel it. I’m feeling it……the swelling up mana. And then this perfected body of mine! Aa, even so……I’m amazing."

Myself that was hesitant and irresolute until now feels stupid. There is no need to worry about anything. Right now I can do anything. Yes……I have been reborn.

I spread out my arms and stand on one foot while rotating and hugging myself.

"Amazing. Right now I can even fly in the sky! No, as expected I cannot fly in the sky huh? But, my feeling is always like flying in the sky! My heart is FREEDOOOMMM!!"

And then I stood on both feet and lifted both my hands with a yell.

"This is growth! This is the new me! There is nothing to be scared about anymore. I am……I am REBORNNNNNNNNN!! Congratulations, me! Thank you, me! You are really cool, me! I love you, me!"

And then I’m laughing loudly. During that time voices came from inside the Jewel.

[What’s this guy!?]

[E, even for me this is the first time I saw an “after growth” of this level……ku, kukuh]

[A prodigy……you are the first prodigy ever since Walt House was founded, Lyle!]

[Should I say that it’s not just for show that you were once called a genius? However this is……pufuh]

[……Lyle, amazing.]

[Oh dear, to think that Lyle is an outstanding talent of this degree. I was worried that he was in a poor state for really long but……]

[He might be the greatest even throughout history. Of course, it’s in the field of making people laugh that is……buhahaha!!]

Hm~m, apparently the ancestors are also rejoicing in my growth. They are holding back their laugh. No, some of them are laughing hard. Like the First who is hitting the round table *bam bam* loudly.

When I noticed, the door of the hut where I’m laughing loudly opened. Novem was stiffening there. Furthermore, behind her is Aria-san holding a bucket that is filled with water.

Sophia-san was also standing there.

"Everyone, what’s wrong?"

When I brushed up my beautiful blue hair and display my upper body in the open, Sophia-san’s face turned bright red.

"Wha, what are you doing!? Wear your clothes. Clothes!"

"You’re stupid aren’t you, Sophia."

"No, no honorific!? No, I don’t mind that but why so suddenly……"

I smiled at Sophia who is bright red.

"Between us, something like clothes are just a bother right?"

Then Sophia ran away from the hut. Aria spilled a bit of water from the bucket while entering the hut.

"Wait, just now what do you—"

"Aria……you're beautiful too today. Yes, I'm glad to be together with you since that fateful meeting until today."

Aria let go of the bucket and water was spilled to the surrounding. Her mouth is opening and closing with a flustered look, then she get out of the hut with unsteady gait.

"Hm? I tried to praise her but was it no good? Oops, Novem……I love you. So much that I want to embrace you."

The First yelled inside the Jewel that fell silent.

[This guy, he damn said it! Even though he was so cowardly like that, he damn said it after the growth.]

The Fourth is finding fault on me.

[Making a pass at the three of them simultaneously is just not done though. However, that was really amazingly straight pick-up lines.]

However, Novem cleared her throat and smiled, then she said to me.

"I'll pretend to not hear those words just now, Lyle-sama. Also……"

"What's wrong? Aah, wait, I get it. You fall in love all over me again huh."

Novem back stepped when I winked and put my hand on my waist. She then closed the hut's door hard. Perhaps she brought wooden board or something, because next moment I heard the sound of nails getting knocked, blocking the door.

It was extremely fast.

The Third was taken aback.

[Ah, Lyle got locked inside.]

Dear god. To think that Novem’s desire to monopolize me is this strong. Furthermore, she also circled to the window and hurriedly blocked it.

I can hear Novem’s voice from the other side of the wall.

"……I’m sorry. But, this is also for Lyle-sama’s sake. I will forget about today, so please don’t let it weigh your mind."

I yelled at such Novem.

"What!? You want me to retake it? Novem, which part of my confession that you don’t like!? Or perhaps you are telling me to whisper my love to you every day!? Got it. From now on I’ll whisper it to you every day!"

The Second was laughing.

[It’s amazing he can be this positive. He is like a completely different person.]

With a serious voice the Third,

[Like this, perhaps we should call him as Lyle-san……no, 【Mr. Lyle】. However, to think that Lyle is an existence this great……kuh, kukuh, kuhahahah—!!]

I could feel from the Jewel that the Third was laughing and rolling around.

I can feel that Novem is feeling awfully tormented. Surely she is moved by the confession of love from me. No doubt about it.

"……Lyle-sama, I’m sorry. I’m so……!"

Novem ran away while crying. At the end it felt like she was laughing, but surely it was from happiness.

I made a pose inside the hut while saying.

"None of them is honest. But, they’re cute like that."

The guffawing voice of the ancestors from inside the Jewel could be heard.

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"STOP IT ALREADYYYYYY!!"

Inside the Jewel. At the room of round table.

I’m crouching on the floor while holding my head—no, blocking my ears. Around me the ancestors were grinning while repeating and muttering my speech and action from morning until afternoon.

[A refreshing morning. But, the weather was cloudy today wasn’t it?]

[I can even fly in the sky, that one was interesting.]

[Between us clothes are just a hindrance right, that was amazing. At that time I was amazed he could say that.]

[I’ll whisper my love to you everyday……you’re going to really do it right? I really want to see that~]

[The retake line was simply funny for me.]

[Fall in love all over again, that part was also good.]

[……My heart is freedom……-!]

I glared at the Seventh who was shaking while holding his stomach.

"You all, you said that even though you already know! M, me at that time……why did I act and speak like that……GODDAMMITTTTT!!"

I hit my head on the floor many times to erase the mortifying memory. But, I hate my brain that is remembering it so vividly.

I heard that growth would make the person's feeling to be uplifted but, I never even thought that it would be like that. Should I call it a feeling of omnipotence, that feeling was terrifying in another meaning.

The Third was laughing while approaching me.

[Haha~, but it was really amazing you know, Lyle. Certainly that state……let's call it Mr. Lyle state. That was also amazing but, Lyle's growth was just as amazing as that.]

I wasn't happy at all even if I was told that.

I kept hanging down my head while lending my ear to the Second's talk.

[The amount of mana your body can keep also increased drastically. Besides, try looking at the ceiling.]

When I slowly lifted my face and looked at the ceiling, there were a total of twenty two gems embedded in radiating shape centered on a large jewel. And then, there are eight gems shining.

In one place, the three gems lining up are all shining. Surely it's meaning that I have learned all of the First's Art.

The Third placed his hand on my shoulder.

[You already know the name of your own Art aren't you?]

This morning, when I was at that excited state, I understood what is the use of my Art. The name also flashed in my mind.

"It came to my mind but……but, how should I say it, at that time it wasn't the time for it."

The Third clapped my shoulder several times after that.

[Isn't that right! Because, those three……their faces were bright red, it was really awkward then.]

The ancestors are having fun thinking that it's not their problem. The Fourth lightly pushed up his glasses and its lenses glinted.

[Now then, everyone……let's enter the main topic. Lyle, look at the round table.]

I've noticed but, I looked at the zanbatou floating inside the room. The shape is similar with the zanbatou that the First had. It was silver with blue lines on it. The length was almost as high as me, a really boorish sword was floating there.

It was floating at the First's spot. The First is sitting on the round table, looking up at the great sword.

"Eh, the chair……"

The Fourth explained the great sword.

[Honestly, there are many things that we don't understand. The Seventh said that it might be the influence of the rare metal used as the Jewel's decoration. It seems it's reproducing the weapon that we used.]

The First looked up at the great sword.

[Well, it looks even more solid and convenient than the one I used though.]

The Sevent folded his arms.

[Honestly, we don’t know why it turned out like this. I was the one who requested a craftsman to work on the rare metal presented to me, but even I don’t know about the detail. But, the only thing that I can say is that the rare metal reacted and it became like this.]

There was no doubt that the zanbatou could be used, but it seemed no one understood how it became like this.

"Well, I’m thankful that I have many usable weapons though. In that case, the condition for the weapon to materialize is to teach the whole Art then?"

While I’m thinking that it will be convenient if there are also other weapons, everyone stood up.

The Fourth looked at me with a slightly sad expression.

[Lyle……talk with the First. We will leave our seat.]

Everyone returned to their own room of memory. The First got down from the round table and looked at me.

[Yosh! Let’s go.]

The First led me to his memory room. The chair had vanished, but the memory room was remaining.

Chapter 30 – Parting

The scene spreading in there was the memory of the First that I saw before—far in its future.

It was just a tranquil village, but no matter how I looked—.

"It feels like, the fields are jumbled isn't it?"

The shape of the fields was irregular. It felt even more jumbled then what I previously saw, even so the village was becoming larger too.

The First who walked inside the village scratched the back of his head with his right hand.

[……I wanted to let everyone eat until they're full. That was why, I enlarged the fields.]

Crassel who had grown into a young man was approaching from the other direction with a stern expression.

"Ah……"

He passed through us and ahead of him, the First—Basil who had grown old was just going out while carrying a hoe. His white hair increased and he had definitely weakened from his golden age.

[Stop making a mess already, oyaji!]

[……I can do whatever I like.]

Basil didn't try to listen to Crassel.

The surrounding was dyed grey, and the scene changed. This time it looked like ten more years had passed. There was the figure of Crassel adjusting the village together with his retainer. He was trying to put the fields that were expanded haphazardly into order, and

then managing it properly. But, Basil who had become an old man passed near them wordlessly while carrying a hoe. He went working without even giving a glance at Crassel.

[……I thought everyone would be happy if the fields are enlarged. That was why I worked hard. In the end, I was mistaken. I caused trouble for the Second……Crassel.]

The villagers sent cold gaze and words toward Crassel.

[Even though the First wasn't bothered by small things like this.]

[It's annoying how he tampered with the field, saying it's for the soil's maintenance or whatever.]

[Aa~a, it was more peaceful when it was the previous head who led us.]

Crassel ignored those words and desperately worked. The First said.

[He wouldn't even talk to me anymore. Even when we met in the mansion he wouldn't say anything. Well, it was also because I was hardheaded. We both wouldn't talk to each other. That's why, when I woke up here and that guy made fun of me……I felt just a bit happy. I wanted to talk like that more when we were still alive.]

"Eh? You two didn't talk to each other until the end!?"

Then the First folded his arms and looked at me with a laugh.

[Our memory only continued until the moment we passed down the Jewel. After that the memory is hazy, or perhaps we don't have it. That's why, I don't remember how I died.]

Come to think of it, the ancestors said such thing. I looked at Crassel. Even while the villagers were looking at him coldly, he was working desperately for the village's sake.

[……I guess this is the only thing that I can teach you. Even if you forced yourself and worked hard, you will make someone else to clean up after you. Well, this was only because I was an idiot though.]

When the First said that, the scenery of the surrounding changed.

It was morning. The sun rose, and the surrounding vegetations were wet with dew. The air is clear.

The figures of the people around were gone, it was only me and the First facing each other at the center of the village.

"Sa, say……"

I got a bad premonition.

[Lyle. You know……I think you're amazing. Even without me teaching you my Art, you tried to draw it out with your own strength. Besides, unlike me you got smart! A descendant like you was born from the bloodline of someone like me. You are my pride.]

"No, even if you suddenly told me that……err, what is it with the First today? Something is strange."

The First smiled sadly.

[Lyle, what do you think about Aria-chan? Surely she'll become a good woman yeah.]

"No, that's why right now—"

I felt that my bad premonition would come true. Besides, for some reason the First felt slightly weak. He didn't feel overflowing with excessive vitality and spoke loudly like usual.

[I see. But, cherish her. After all she is the descendant—of the first love that was out of my reach. She is a bit too energetic but, she's cute like that isn't it? I want her to be happy. And also, you too.]

"……Me?"

The First looked at me while saying.

[Lyle……have you decided your objective?]

"I haven't, decided yet."

I looked down. It's pointless to even lie. I became adventurer. I also aimed to become first class. But, somewhere in my heart I felt a great discomfort.

[Well, that's fine. After all one day you might do something amazing that the like of me cannot even imagine. Also……about Celes. That girl is dangerous.]

My little sister, and according to the First she is 【the one entranced by the evil god】—an existence that appeared at the turning point of history and rampaged around. The other ancestors listened to that story with a grain of salt, but the First was the only one who was really wary. He said to me with a serious gaze.

[I think, you're the only one who can stop her. Lyle Walt……if it's you, you can stop her.]

My legs trembled. I recalled my fight with Celes. I became wounded all over and experienced an overwhelming defeat. I'm reminded of such fear.

[Is it scary? But you know……no, I guess I shouldn’t be the one saying this. You decide your own path. It’s fine even if you don’t challenge Celes. Live as you like. But, be sure to live. Live facing forward. That’s all I ask of you.]

When I lifted my head, the First was laughing.

"……First, why are you telling me that? Are you going away?"

The First was laughing.

[I’m someone dead from the start. It’s stranger for me to keep staying here forever. But you know……I might want to watch you doing your best a bit more. With Novem-chan and Aria-chan with you, you working hard through hardships……I wanted to see that a little bit more. I wanted to teach you various things but……there isn’t anything that I can teach you. Perhaps there is only fishing left.]

"……Fishing, please teach me that. I never done that before."

[……There ain’t any time. I’m at my limit already here.]

I tried speaking selfishly. The First smiled with a troubled look. Blue light particles were overflowing from his body. The First lifted his right hand.

[Lyle! Raise your hand!]

"Ye, yes!"

When I raised my right hand, the First walked toward me and strongly high fived that hand while passing beside me. The last words I heard were—.

[Have more confidence. You are the descendant I’m proud off after all. Also…..that last punch to that orc was really cool. As expected of my descendant!]

—Those words.

.

When I noticed, I was inside the room of round table—standing at the entrance to the First's memory room, the spot where the door "was" at. Near the round table, the great sword was floating there as though to indicate that the First was once here.

The Second was remaining inside the room of round table. He sat on his own chair and folding his arms while looking down slightly.

"……The First……is gone."

When I said that, the Second slightly nodded.

[I see.]

"Did you know? Then, why—besides, you can get along slightly better with him"

There was a lot I wanted to say to the Second. But, the inside of my head would get into order. The sudden loneliness, and the question why it turned out like this—.

The Second spoke with a kind voice to the confused me.

[……When he died, Oyaji apologized to me. I thought it's too late but, I was also the same like him. Still, we cannot be honest. We're family after all. Besides, arguing with each other here also wasn't bad. Though it's not fun thinking that I also got bad upbringing.]

The Second smiled sadly and looked up at the great sword.

Tears overflowed from me. They overflowed……and spilled down in large drops.

[Lyle, become a man worthy for this great sword. Become a fine man like the founder of noble house of Walt. He was an idiot but, even so he is the father that I looked up to. And he is the dragon slaying hero.]

Dragon slaying hero.

"……I, I under……stand. Say……"

[Hm?]

"Why, the Second used bow? If you looked up to the First then using great sword or……"

The Second slightly chuckled.

[It was impossible for me. I couldn't swing it around, but also……the truth is, I want to protect Oyaji's back. That was why I took up a bow. In the end, we had a breakup so I couldn't protect his back even until the end.]

I think they are awkward. The First……and also the Second.

My tears wouldn't stop.

Recently the First was the one who trusted me the most. Just when I thought that he had recognized me, he immediately vanished. He was rough……even so, he was the one who felt the most human. He said what he thought, and kept walking forward even when his surrounding made fun of him. I pressed my face with both hands.

"Ahaha, this is no good. My tears won't stop. Really just what's with him……when I thought that he is annoying, he immediately gone……it's lonely."

The Second looked at the great sword while saying.

[That’s our role. The role of entrusting our Arts to Lyle Walt. You can understand it even from us talking like this. We are optimized in order to teach you. the way we talk is also like that.]

The era when the Second lived—I can understand the words of someone from that era without any problem. The Second said that it’s strange.

There are words that become popular or obsolete depending on the era. I’m able to talk normally with someone from more than a hundred years ago is strange. In other words, the ancestors are adjusted so we can understand each other without trouble.

"Such thing……just what is this Jewel!?"

It was as though they were an existence born for my convenience and vanished when their role was over. That was the memory of the ancestors. However, the Second said.

[That’s fine. We’re fine with that……besides, Lyle. The First—Oyaji said to us. Take care of you, he said. We intend to do so even without him telling us that. Everyone’s opinion matched in that. That’s why, don’t let it weigh your mind.]

Don’t let it weigh your mind—there is no way I can just say, okay sure, even if they told me that. For me, they were people who properly talked with me and taught me various things for the first time after five years. Besides, even if they were making fun of me, they were also watching over me.

—My chest felt painful. It was a pain that I never felt until now. If it’s like this, getting insulted is still better. It felt like there was a gaping hole opened in my chest. I strongly grasped my chest. Compared to all the loneliness I felt until now……this was far harder than even that.

"……I don’t want something like this."

The Second didn’t respond to my voice. But, he was watching me crying in that place.

Epilogue

The problem with Maini House was discussed in the mansion of Bagan House.

But, it was also a fact that a dungeon existed and they had no leeway to concern themselves with other matter. It seemed that Maini House decided to leave the case unresolved this time.

It seemed they left the punishment for Zappa-san to Dale-san.

Inside Bagan House's mansion—at the work room of the family head, I and Dale-san were checking the documents there. The records of the village that were left without anyone even reading it until now were piled up here. There were only two men inside this room that was covered with dust. It felt really lonely, but right now it's better to stay beside Dale-san.

Dale-san was smiling bitterly.

"How embarrassing. Medard-san scolded me. Even though I weren't told anything, there are many ways to investigate it, he said. It can't be helped that he is exasperated of me."

The document I'm reading is left behind by the previous head. There, it was written why the leaderships of Bagan House headed together to war.

The Second looked at that and felt understanding.

[So they really intended to open up the forest to connect this place with Dalien with a highway. The highway will also connect to Maini House's village, and also the city of the viscount house……I see, they intended to make a road for connecting coach to pass.]

Looking at the map, certainly if they can make a road here there will be a lot of territories that get helped. If the road can go until

Dalien, the passenger can also transfer to connecting coach that goes to Central from there.

The Third showed interest to this plan.

[It’s a small village. If there is a highway passing here then it will really develop. That’s why they were forcing themselves to persuade the surrounding. They used the war as reason to take the higher-up who was disagreeing with that plan to go looking at village or settlement that had highway passing through them……it looked really hard to realize but, if this succeeded then this village will be able to obtain great revenue.]

The previous head and his eldest son participated in the war wasn’t for fighting, but more for fulfilling their duty to the baron and then to have discussion with the baron about the plan going ahead.

They laid out the groundwork with the feudal lords of the surrounding territories, and they thought to show the success example to Paola-san’s father who was opposing the establishment of the highway.

And then, the document also mentioned about Dale-san in regard to the plan. There was the autograph of the previous head and his eldest son. They wrote that they would entrust the settlement that was arranged to be developed to Dale-san. We discovered evidence in the memo that they were trying to leave behind something for the hardworking Dale-san.

"……Dale-san, please read this one first."

"Eh? O, okay."

Dale-san who looked slightly haggard acted strange after giving his blessing to the marriage of Paola-san and Pini-san that was decided yesterday. He was putting on a brave front.

It seemed that he liked Paola-san, but apparently Paola-san clearly told him that she couldn’t marry with Dale-san who was a feudal lord.

"It looks like they were really in a hurry. It looks like they forced themselves to participate in the war because the previous feudal lord had his own thinking."

It was the fact that they were forcing themselves, but it seemed they were also hurried on by the surrounding. Gathering fund, persuading the baron, persuading Maini House and their lord the viscount. It seemed the plan had progressed until the stage where a place of discussion was set up.

Dale-san pressed his face.

"……I never heard anything like this, not even once. If only they told me"

The Second spoke with a bit of thorn.

[Will he accept it if they told him? There was large possibility of him opposing it due to him leaning too strongly toward the villager’s side. That’s why they progressed the plan without telling him. They also didn’t mention this to the villagers also must be because there was no groundwork to make them understand.]

Groundwork—it was how the villagers couldn’t imagine the profit from maintaining a highway. Maintenance for the highway that the connecting coach would run on was necessary.

The men of the village would receive money if they worked to maintain the highway. If an inn could be set up in the village, then the guest would spend money there.

If the city of the viscount and the baron was connected, the village of Bagan House would be neatly on that connecting path. Besides, there would be no need to take a troublesome detour anymore.

When Dale-san finished reading the document, he looked up to the ceiling. He was making a pained expression.

"……Zappa finally confessed. About how he was the cause of father and big brother's death too. And how he caused problem because of his rash action too. I wonder what should I do now. Paola will marry with Pini. Zappa cannot be left alone. ……Haha, I'm completely alone."

Regarding Zappa-san, it was planned that he would be punished really strictly. Dale-san is worrying about what kind of punishment it should be. Maini House, and then Bagan House……to make both sides accept it, the punishment has to be heavy no matter what.

Zappa-san exposed both sides to danger. It seemed there wasn't anyone who asked for Zappa-san to be spared. On the contrary, it will be troubling if Pini-san is gone, so there were people who appealed for his punishment to be reduced.

Perhaps this difference was from their habitual deed.

But, Dale-san who would be the one to decide the punishment was suffering.

"……I have to punish someone who I've known for long. In the end, I will be resented."

How will the villagers think about Dale-san's decision……would it be a proper punishment? The seeds of Dale-san's worry were many.

The Third showed understanding to Dale-san.

[Something like this can happen, this is why getting along too well with other is also problematic. Well, he should get a wife quickly. A noble wife is necessary for a feudal lord.]

Isn’t it wrong to recommend someone who has only gone through broken heart to marry?

When I made that kind of face, the Fifth told me.

[Something like love is secondary in marriage between nobles after all. Well, it’s also necessary to have a heir as soon as possible.]

The Third made fun of the Fifth.

[As expected from the person who has a wife and a lot of mistresses. What you are saying is different.]

[…..Leave me alone.]

Feudal lord is resented and misunderstood sometimes. People might think that they are living freely and prosperously, but that’s not really the case. I think that being a feudal lord is troublesome.

"…..Dale-san, what are you planning to do from now?"

"Let’s see. First I’ll go around to apologize and gives my greeting. It’s fine if it’s only little by little, I want to improve this village. First I’ll go to Medard-san’s place I guess."

Hearing Dale-san saying that, I told him a slightly interesting story.

"Now that you mentioned that, it was Medard-san who taught us the shortest route when escaping from the orc. He seems to be really knowledgeable even though it was the territory of Bagan House. Perhaps he had gone to that area a few times before?"

Dale-san recalled the situation.

"No, now that you mentioned it……why did he know……he had been there? But, that are is our territory since a long time ago……"

I smiled slightly.

"Can it become a material for negotiation? Well, that's only after this side has shown sincerity first though."

I'm saying that Medard-san too had done something that he couldn't tell to other people. Certainly relationship between neighbors was really troublesome with so many things piling up at both sides.

"……You're right. I'll check it later. More importantly, you will return tomorrow won't you? What about the right to challenge the dungeon first?"

I listened to the disappointed voices of the ancestors while answering Dale-san.

"Our equipment became really no good after the fight with the orc. The viscount-sama should form a subjugation force while we are preparing, so we'll give it up this time."

Zelphy-san's equipment was worn out, and all of us were also in the same state. My saber also became no good.

Dale-san said thanks to me.

"Thank you, Lyle-kun. I'm glad that you came here. About when I tried to hit you……I apologize. Well, I think it's wrong to surround yourself with many women though. Medard-san also agreed with me in that."

When I went to Medard-san's territory, it was always together with Sophia-san. Because of that he misunderstood that both of us had loving relationship with each other.

"……I want to say my excuse but, first let’s finish the work here."

I said that while looking at the piling up documents of Bagan House.

.

The next day.

We who got on the wagon and returned to Dalien were making camp. We stopped the wagon at the side of the road and finished our meal. After that we took turn to keep watch until morning came.

I and Sophia-san were keeping watch of the surrounding. The time might be up because Sophia-san stood up.

"Aria came so I’m going back. ……Ple, please take care to not get cold."

There was no conversation. Or rather, even when I talked to her, Sophia-san would only reply with "Yes" or "No" right away so the talk wouldn’t continue.

The Seventh was laughing inside the Jewel.

[How innocent. Perhaps she is feeling embarrassed.]

The Sixth was doubtful.

[Is that so? But, if she doesn’t come forward more, like this, then no one will be interested though.]

The Fifth was exasperated.

[If there’s no reaction from you, doesn’t that mean she is a good girl?]

What does that mean? While I’m thinking that, Aria-san came beside me.

Tonight is full moon so the surrounding is bright and quiet. I can hear the sound of insects. I'm using Arts to keep watch of the surrounding, but there isn't any sign of enemy approaching.

"……I'm sitting beside you."

"Please."

My relationship with Aria-san is also awkward after my growth. It's not in a bad sense. Her face turns red even when I talk to her.

We cannot convey anything to each other like that, so recently often we would talk with Novem or Zelphy-san between us.

"The, the full moon is bright isn't it?"

The fire is making crackling sound. I poked at the fire and replied. The conversation didn't continue from there and we kept silent.

"You are avoiding me aren't you?"

Aria-san glared at me.

"That can't be helped! You said things like destiny and so to me like that! Aah, geez! Now I remember something strange."

Something strange. That strangely bothered me. Thinking that it will be a starting clue for a conversation, I asked Aria-san.

"Something strange?"

"It's a story of Lockwarde House's unrequited love. About this red Gem you know……it belonged to the ancestor who married into Lockwarde House and it was passed down through generations to the daughter. Well, most of the times man would marry into our house, it seemed that we got a lot of girls in our family lineage."

Now that she mentioned it, Aria-san's father was also son-in-law adopted into the family. I listened to the continuation of the story.

"The truth is, something like red Gem would be better in a house of military family, and yet why did Lockwarde House had something like this then. At the surface the reason is so that the woman can fight in the hour of need but……actually, this is something that the ancestor couldn't hand to the person who she loved."

Person she loved. Those words strangely caught my attention. Aria-san mentioned about an ancestor marrying into Lockwarde House. Alice-san who was the first love of the First came into mind.

"It's a story of really long time ago. In the kingdom's calendar……around even before the first hundred years? The ancestor who married into the family had someone she loved. What's more that person was from a noble house with rank that only barely allowed them to pass down the title. He was the third son from that house."

The Fourth leaked out his voice.

[Oho]

Aria-san continued.

"The ancestor was always strong-willed and lively, but she would look demur when in front of that person. She would behave like a lady but……that person, he volunteered into a reclamation group. That was why, she wanted to give him something and she planned to present this red Gem that was popular at that time."

The Third also seemed to notice.

[……Good grief, those two kept passing each other.]

"But then, in the end she couldn’t give it. And then, she didn’t even marry and waited for that person to come back to hand this Gem to him at that time. After that, she got to an age where she had no other choice but to marry. That was why, she brought the red Gem with her."

The Second laughed slightly.

[Should I say that it was really like Oyaji, or……looking from the view of me as his son, this really give me complicated feeling.]

"She never talked with that person up to that time. Furthermore, when she came to the mansion of Lockwarde House she happened to see that person and there was a fuss or something……well, that kind of story is passed down until now. That’s why, it seems there is a precept from that ancestor, so that her daughter and granddaughter will properly convey their feeling to the other party. What do you think, strange right?"

I shook my head.

The era, and then the situation……there is no way that this could be someone else who was only in a really similar situation. I who had seen various things in the memory room of the First thought that.

In other words, this is just like what the First said —.

[This meeting was fate. No doubt about it.]

—The Third said it a bit regretfully.

"It’s not strange. Besides that person in the story……it’s my ancestor."

"Eh?"

"Is the name of Aria-san's ancestor Alice-san? My ancestor's name is Basil."

Aria-san was surprised.

"Eh, yo, you know? E, eh?"

It seems it's not a mistake. Aria-san is in confusion. I look up at the full moon and said.

"……This meeting is fate. I think it's fine like that."

The First's feeling reached Alice-san. Or rather, it wasn't unrequited love but mutual love, that's amazing.

Furthermore, the two never even talked with each other.

Hearing the word fate, perhaps Aria-san remembered my after growth. Her face turned red and she averted her gaze. I laughed seeing that.

But, looking up to the sky I felt a bit sad. It would change nothing even if the First heard this story but, I wanted to tell him. No, perhaps it's better that he doesn't hear this?

Certainly this meeting, it might be fate that continued from the First. No, not might, it was really fate.

Today the moon was really beautiful.

"……The moon is beautiful."

Then, the inside of the Jewel became noisy. However, it was lacking.

[Oi oi, seriously?]

[No, isn't this just Lyle not understanding what he is saying himself?]

[But those are famous words right? Though I don’t know whose words those are.]

[If he said that in this timing, then it’s amazing even if it’s a coincidence.]

[Lyle too is really something huh.]

[The problem is whether he himself know it or not though.]

There were six voices. It was lacking one person.

Aria-san opened and closed her mouth. Her face was bright red and her eyes moistened.

"I, I don’t mind even if I die!"

Aria-san suddenly said something strange. I tilted my head at her.

"No, even if you told me you don’t mind dying……it’s better to not say something like that. I want Aria-san to be happ—ouch!"

For some reason, Aria-san's right hand snapped and I received a hard slap. I'm used to receive unreasonable violence but, why is Aria-san doing this? While I'm thinking that, astonished voices came from inside the Jewel.

[Aa~, it's Lyle just as expected.]

[It's the usual Lyle.]

[That's the worst. Zero point.]

[……I thought that this is the case.]

[Lyle, didn't you like book?]

[It can't be helped just now. You should just accept that slap contently.]

Unbelievably, no one is consoling me in regard to the unreasonable violence just now.

Aria-san stood up wordlessly, walked away from me, and sat down again some distance away, resuming her night watch.

"Aria-san? Err……I apologize if I did something rude so"

When I approached her, Aria-san shifted her face away.

"It's nothing! I know that it's not really your bad but, right now it's no good! That's why I'm begging you go over there!"

I who got rejected returned to my previous spot with my shoulders dropping in dejection. I was simply saying my honest thought that the moon is beautiful and then such strange reply came……was there some kind of mistake?

The ancestors were laughing.

[You are really amazing in various aspect huh.]

[The timing was the best just now.]

[From fate to the moon is beautiful, it's because you said that.]

[……I honestly respect you. After all you said that from yourself.]

[Me too. I think that's amazing, Lyle.]

[I also think so but……it was rude to Aria.]

……The ancestors won't tell me the reason. These people who won't cooperate fully with me in some aspects, will they be gone too someday I wonder?

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(To be continued in Sevens 3)

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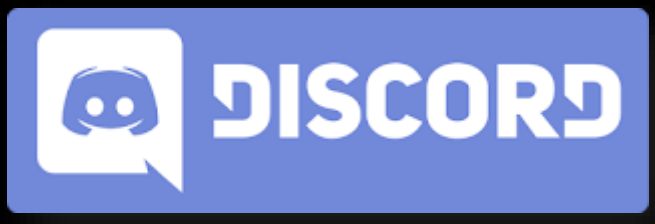
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